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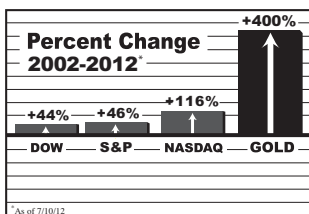


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TRIBAL TIES

On June 20, eight Vietnam War Navy veterans who served on USS *Arikara* traveled to the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in White Shield, N.D., to reunite and meet members of the Arikara tribe. Members of Joseph Young Hawk-Elmer Bear Post 253 escorted the group to a ceremony, where the remaining crewmen presented Robert Bear Jr., hereditary chief of the Arikara tribe, with the ship's ceremonial sword.

Read more about the *Arikara* crewmembers' reunion online:

 www.legion.org/magazine

Kevin Cederstrom photo



The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.5 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 14,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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Tom Hill
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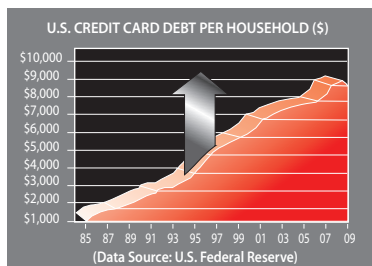
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‘Back to A-stan’

I read with great interest Mark Seavey’s article (July). It struck home for me because my father’s youngest brother rose to a full bird colonel in the Quartermaster Corps in Europe during World War II. Because of my admiration for my uncle, I have often thought about the awesome job the corps

had, and how my uncle played a major role in keeping our troops fully supplied. The statement credited to Frederick the Great – “Without supplies no army is brave” – fits how I felt as a young boy, and even now as a grown man, about my uncle’s job. The soldiers of the Quartermaster Corps are unsung heroes.

– Laban D. Needham, Little Flock, Ark.



‘Restorative Justice’

I read Ken Olsen’s interesting article (July) with great admiration. I am a mentor in the Lehigh County, Pa., district attorney’s Veterans Mentoring Program, which offers volunteer services to veterans who commit low-level crimes. As a retired psychotherapist with over 50 years of experience, the transition to mentoring my charges was not difficult; however, many of my co-mentors volunteered with the attitude that they wanted to give back what the service had given them. I congratulate them and the district attorney’s office for their efforts in making veterans’ lives a little easier in reconnecting with society.

– Don Forman, Hellertown, Pa.

Higher taxes for high earners

In regard to taxes for high earners (Big Issues, July), it is imperative that the highest should pay more. Lurid examples show billionaires paying much lower tax rates than those having modest incomes.

This has been going on for a long time. Billionaire Nelson

Rockefeller completely avoided taxes. Warren Buffett pays a lower tax rate than his secretary. Mitt Romney’s rate is only 15 percent. When I was president of a small engineering corporation, I paid corporate taxes fully. Yet power brokers fixed it so that GE got away without paying a penny. This is outrageously unfair.

When I enlisted in the Army during the Korean War, I thought I was pledging to defend a nation that was of the people, by the people and for the people – not of the rich, by the rich and for the rich.

– Sidney J. Goodman, Mahwah, N.J.

After reading Sen. John Thune’s view, I have a much better understanding of why Congress is in total gridlock. He accuses the president of playing politics with our tax code, and touts that this Congress should work in a bipartisan manner to accomplish real tax reform. Unfortunately, the good senator neglected to mention that he is aligned with controversial multimillionaire Grover Norquist and his antitax

group. Thune has signed Norquist's Taxpayer Protection Pledge, promising that he will never vote to raise taxes.

To most of us, Congress working in a bipartisan manner would mean negotiating in a give-and-take fashion for the good of the people they represent. After signing the pledge, it kind of makes you wonder just who Thune actually represents.

— Jay Richley, Cadillac, Mich.

I find Rep. David Cicilline's view offensive. I am a resident of Rhode Island, and for him to talk about tax fairness and working families contradicts the tax policies of our state. As a retiree, I am forced to make state tax payments quarterly because Rhode Island is one of the very few states that tax retirees' Social Security benefits.

If Cicilline is so concerned with fairness, would he be willing to influence the state legislature to exempt these benefits from state income tax? I think not. And it's a shame, because the taxes imposed on Rhode Island retirees are forcing many to move out of state.

— John Stevens, Ashaway, R.I.

The question of fairness in taxation, as presented again in the proposed Buffett Rule, is merely a revisiting of an age-old problem. Even Benjamin Franklin expressed his frustration with the counterparts of today's 1 percent, the provincial governors and the proprietary class: "These public quarrels were all at the bottom owing to the proprietaries, our hereditary

governors, who, when any expense was to be incurred for the defense of their province, with incredible meanness instructed their deputies to pass no act for levying the necessary taxes, unless their vast estates were in the same act expressly excused; and they had even taken bonds of these deputies to observe such instructions."

— Edward T. Swan, Evansville, Ind.

VA and mental health care

This article hit home (Veterans Update, July). My wife has two bachelor's degrees in psychology and counseling, and three associate degrees in health. But she doesn't seem to have a chance of getting a job in mental health at the Houston VA because she is not already an employee. She has applied too many times to count. She could even work at a local outpatient clinic. Where are the jobs?

— John Wilhelm, Dayton, Texas

The Republic of Wyoming?

This article would be laughable if it wasn't so frightening (Rapid Fire, July). This kind of rhetoric sounds ominously like that of the southern states prior to the start of the Civil War.

Upon secession, Wyoming would come into possession of at least 50 fully armed nuclear-tipped ballistic missile silos with a total of about 500 individual or MIRVed nuclear weapons. Its strategic forces would be the third most powerful in the world, with only Russia and the United States ahead of it. I am beginning to be more afraid of homegrown nuclear terrorism

than I am about the threat from Pakistan, Iran or North Korea. Responsible conservatives need to publically call a halt to the activities of their fringe.

— Rita Wessel, West Blocton, Ala.

'Identity Crisis'

The article by Alan Dowd (June) alerted me to a cause that I had forgotten existed. I am of the opinion that we are more a republic of 50 states and not a democracy that dictates to the rest. I have an uphill battle influencing my city and county government, much less my state government. To be dictated to by others in more populous states, whose ideas are different than mine, is offensive.

— Jim Hatcher, Elizabethtown, Ky.

Alan Dowd performed an important service by carefully analyzing the Electoral College. One would hasten to add, however, the wild card of a "faithless elector," which is one who chooses to defy a state's mandate in a general election. It absolutely can happen. Also, our troubles today come not from the size of a state's population skewing an election, but from the concentration of urban vs. rural electorates. Direct democracy has a peculiar weakness, as the French discovered during their revolution. But it is false to assure voters that every vote counts when it often does not, since the popular vote count can be overridden. If ever there was a need to impose uniformity of election laws among the states, federal elections would be it.

— Michael S. Bell, Joplin, Mo.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE WELCOMES YOUR OPINIONS

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More at stake than a budget deficit

If you're like me, when you first heard the word "sequestration," you looked for a dictionary. Or perhaps your eyes glazed over, hoping to just let the word float down that long river of legal mumbo jumbo. Unfortunately, the word has not gone away. It is said with more frequency and sounds more ominous since we encountered it last winter, when the bipartisan congressional "supercommittee" failed to produce a plan to reduce the federal budget deficit.

Sequestration is indeed a legal term. According to Auburn University's online "Glossary of Political Economy Terms," sequestration traditionally refers to the court stepping in between two parties in an ownership dispute over a valuable piece of property. An agent of the court seizes the property and puts it away for safekeeping – sequestering it – until the matter is resolved.

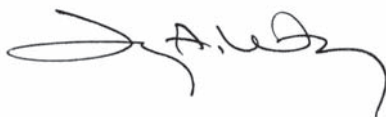
We are not, however, talking about a property dispute. We are talking about government's highest priority – the safety of its people – due to a \$500 billion sequestration of the defense budget over the next 10 years set to go into effect in January because Washington failed to get its fiscal house in order. As adapted by Congress, sequestration is now defined as automatic spending cuts to meet or enforce certain budget policy goals. These reductions, along with others already planned, would leave the Pentagon almost \$1 trillion short of the resources needed to protect our nation in the coming years. Such cuts do not bode well for U.S. troops now at war. They also do not bode well for military retirees, recruits, hospital patients, or researchers and developers.

If Congress fails to find a different solution immediately, the matter will be resolved without accountability. Our elected officials will walk away from their biggest challenge, each blaming the other, because they could not reach an agreement that would keep our nation safe without going so far as to pay for that service. In terms of jobs and community impact, the economic result of a defense-budget drawdown is debatable at best, and may be a wash. For the sake of national security and the economy alike, Washington needs to look elsewhere for relief.

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has been clear about the potential consequences of this looming nightmare. Last November, he said the automatic cuts of sequestration would hollow out the military, leaving an organizational structure without personnel, training programs or equipment. "It's a ship without sailors," he warned lawmakers. "It's a brigade without bullets. It's an air wing without enough trained pilots. It's a paper tiger."

Just like that, America goes from global superpower to paper tiger. Terrorists and rogue regimes grow a little stronger, a little more confident, as our ability to oppose them weakens. Just like that, our nation's struggling economy is relieved of enough defense-industry careers to raise the unemployment rate an entire percentage point.

It will take leadership to find a different target to solve this problem. Meanwhile, our troops are at war with terrorists. Instability reigns in the Middle East. Veterans are coming home looking for jobs. And the sequestration clock is ticking toward an hour we simply cannot afford to reach, budget deficit or not.




National Commander
Fang A. Wong

MEMORANDA

POST IT ON FACEBOOK

Photographers are encouraged to post patriotic images – a U.S. flag snapping in the breeze, an American Legion honor guard, a child saluting a veteran, or whatever strikes a chord of pride – on the National Headquarters Facebook page. The photo that receives the most "likes" will be published in *The American Legion Magazine*. For participation rules, visit the Legion website or check out the National Headquarters page on Facebook.

 www.legion.org/facebook

AMERICANISM CONFERENCE

Registration for The American Legion's 14th annual National Americanism Conference in Indianapolis, Sept. 28-30, is available online.

 www.legion.org/cacregistration

CHILDREN & YOUTH CONFERENCE

The 2012 American Legion National Children & Youth Conference registration packet is available online. The conference is Sept. 21-23 in Indianapolis.

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Never underestimate your competition. Just ask Demetrius, the unfortunate Greek general who set out to conquer Rhodes in 305 BC. He assumed that a massive force of 40,000 men, a fleet of Aegean pirates and an arsenal of wall-smashing war machines would be enough to crush the tiny Greek island. He was wrong. The Rhodians were tougher than he thought. And so is this watch. If you've always believed that the biggest, baddest watches had to cost big, bad money, the \$49 Stauer *Colossus Hybrid Chronograph* is here to change your mind.

A monument to toughness. The people of Rhodes were ready for Demetrius and repelled his attack. To celebrate, they built the Colossus of Rhodes, a 107-foot bronze and iron giant that towered over the harbor like a ten-story trophy. It warned future invaders that "Rhodes is tougher than you think." You give the same message when you wear the Stauer *Colossus*.

The timepiece that works twice as hard. In designing the *Colossus Hybrid Chronograph*, our instructions to the watchmaker were clear: build it as tough as a battleship and fill it full of surprises. Make it a hybrid, because it should work twice as hard as a regular watch. And make it look like a million bucks, because when you put it on, you should get excited about rolling up your sleeves. Mission accomplished.

A toolbox on your wrist. It will keep you on schedule, but the *Colossus Hybrid* is about much more than time. The imposing case features a rotating gunmetal bezel that frames the silver, black and yellow face. You'll find a battalion of digital displays on the dial arranged behind a pair of luminescent hands and a bold yellow second hand.

Powered by a precise quartz movement, the watch is doubly accurate in analog and digital mode. And it's packed with plenty of handy extras including a bright green EL back-light for enhanced nighttime visibility, a tachymeter along the outer dial and a full complement of alarms and split-second countdown timers. The *Colossus Hybrid* secures with a folded steel bracelet that highlights a row of striking dark center links. It's a rugged watch that's more than ready for your daily grind.

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Stop deporting young illegal immigrants



SUPPORT

Rep. Ed Pastor, D-Ariz.

■ Pastor serves on the House Appropriations Committee.



OPPOSE

Rep. Tim Griffin, R-Ark.

■ Griffin is a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

The Obama administration's recent decision to halt deportations of certain undocumented young people, who were brought to the United States as children and do not present a risk to national security or public safety, is a positive step forward. These young people are students, servicemembers, engineers, teachers, nurses, entrepreneurs and veterans who know no other country than the United States. Rather than tell them to live in the shadows, we are encouraging them to further give back to their communities and the country they love.

This decision will allow law enforcement officials to focus on the deportation of high-priority individuals who pose the greatest threats to national security and public safety. Instead of spending limited taxpayer dollars on the removal of students completing their college degrees, we can deport dangerous criminals – gang members and drug traffickers – who endanger our communities. By implementing this policy, the Obama administration is ensuring that our nation's immigration policy is more efficient, fair and just.

Contrary to rumors, this new directive does not provide amnesty or immunity, as no path to citizenship or even legal permanent residence will be granted. Rather, those eligible will receive deferred action, resulting in a temporary two-year residency status and the opportunity to apply for work authorization. Deferred action is a type of prosecutorial discretion that the president can exercise under current immigration law.

The Obama administration's announcement is largely acknowledged as a temporary solution to a challenging problem. But until Congress garners the political will to fix our broken immigration system, such a measure is necessary.

When President Obama ordered his administration to stop enforcing immigration laws he didn't like, he justified his decision by saying it was "the right thing to do." Twenty-three million Americans in need of work beg to differ.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

Supporters say President Obama's order relaxing deportations of young illegal immigrants will allow law enforcement to focus on deporting dangerous criminals.

Critics say the president is ignoring the nation's immigration laws.

Americans younger than 25 account for a whopping 41 percent of those who lost their jobs in the past four years. One study found that only 49 percent of recent college graduates had found full-time employment within a year of finishing school.

Many are moving back in with their parents.

Now, due to President Obama's refusal to uphold our immigration laws, younger Americans will have to compete for work with nearly a million new workers who are not citizens.

The DREAM Act, which would have granted legal status to young illegal immigrants, was rejected by Congress in 2010. President Obama lamented this fact last year, admitting he can't "just change the laws unilaterally." Apparently, his quest for re-election changed his mind.

To borrow an analogy from law professor John Yoo and columnist Charles Krauthammer, what if a president proposed a bill abolishing all taxes, and Congress ultimately rejected it? Could the president then order the IRS to stop collecting taxes and declare amnesty for anyone refusing to pay? Of course not; that would be a constitutional crisis and a subversion of clear, written law.

I've co-sponsored the Prohibiting Back-door Amnesty Act, which would stop this administration from implementing its anti-jobs agenda. While U.S. immigration policy does need an overhaul, a policy change of this magnitude must go through Congress. Until then, the law should be respected as the Constitution prescribes.

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Health tips after 50

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), part of the Department of Health and Human Services, offers some tips to help men 50 and older stay healthy:

Get the screenings you need.

These include routine blood pressure and cholesterol checks, colonoscopies to screen for cancer, ultrasounds to check for abdominal aortic aneurysms (a bulging in the abdominal aorta), depression screenings and blood tests for diabetes.

Get your weight under control.

According to AHRQ, the best way to learn if you are overweight or obese is to find your body mass index (BMI). You can learn your BMI by entering your height and weight into a BMI calculator at www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi. A BMI between 18.5 and 25 indicates a normal weight.

Think preventive. This step may include aspirin to prevent heart disease, and immunizations to prevent the flu, pneumonia and other illnesses.

Take steps to good health. In other words, stay active – or get active – and eat right. Learn how at www.healthfinder.gov/prevention.

Stop smoking. It's never too late to quit. For tips on quitting, visit www.smokefree.gov or call (800) 784-8669.

Moderate drinking. AHRQ advises people 65 and younger to have no more than two drinks a day, and those older than 65 to have no more than one drink a day.

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

ON SHAKY GROUND

Take low-sodium advice with a grain of salt.

BY BETH W. ORENSTEIN

Do you watch your salt intake?

The American Heart Association recommends that most adults consume no more than 1,500 milligrams of salt a day. That's a little more than half a teaspoon. But new research suggests that a low-salt diet may not be healthy or necessary.

A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that the problem isn't how much salt people consume, but how much they consume in relation to potassium.

The study showed that people who ate lots of salt but little potassium were twice as likely to die from a heart attack than those who ate equal amounts of both. Researchers concluded that the imbalance was riskier than having too much or too little of either nutrient.

The recommended daily amount of potassium for most adults is 4,700 milligrams. Most women get only about half that, and men even less. Good sources of potassium are spinach, bananas, broccoli and prunes.

Another recent study, published in the *American Journal of Hypertension*, found that while reducing sodium intake can reduce one's risk of high blood pressure, the difference isn't much.

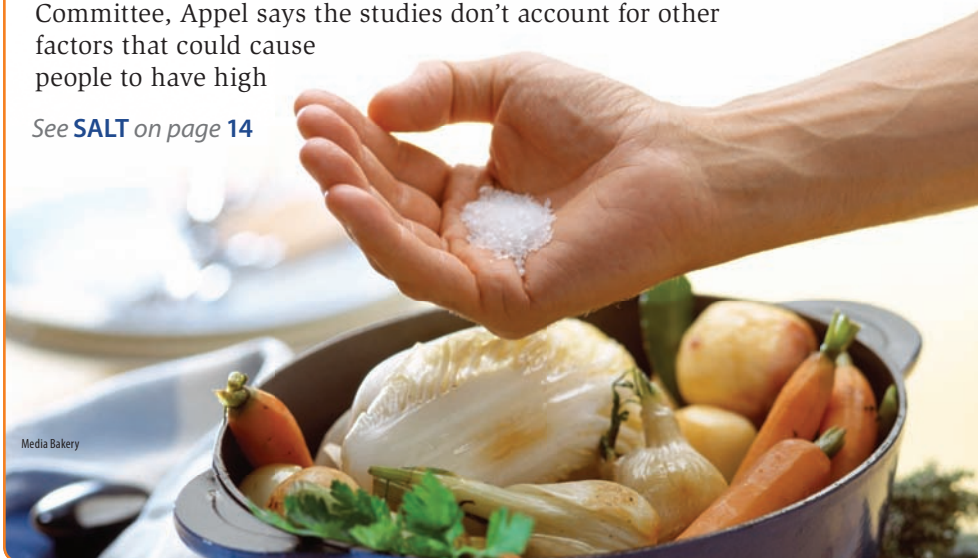
When people with normal blood pressure reduced their salt intake, they saw a 1 percent drop in their blood pressure. Those with elevated blood pressure experienced a 3.5 percent reduction from eating less salt, researchers said.

Not everyone is convinced.

Larry Appel, director of the Welch Center for Prevention, Epidemiology and Clinical Research, says the new research may be misleading. "People who don't want to reduce their sodium intake trumpet studies such as these and blow them out of proportion," he says.

A past chairman of the American Heart Association Nutrition Committee, Appel says the studies don't account for other factors that could cause people to have high

See **SALT** on page 14



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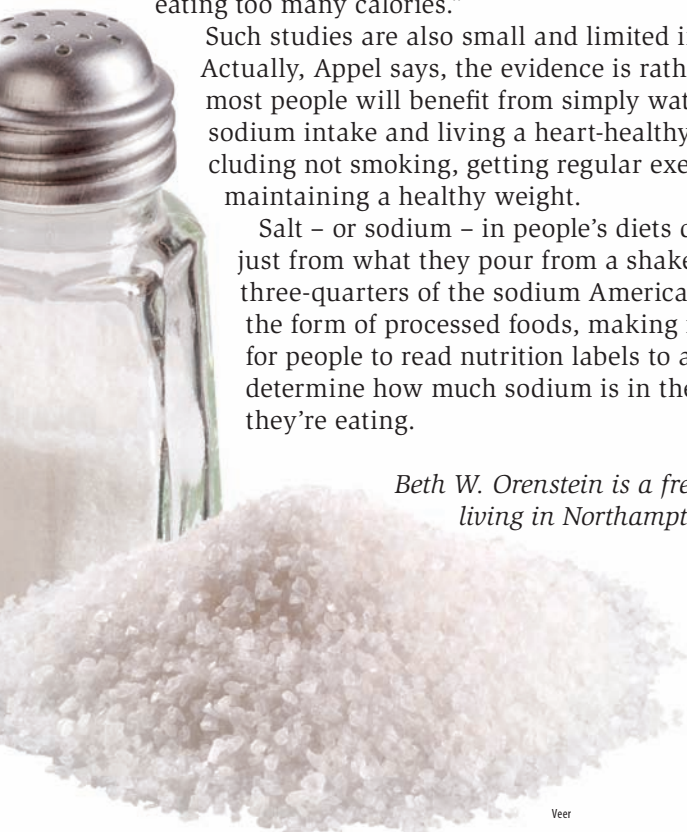
SALT *continued from page 12*

blood pressure, “such as being less physically active and eating too many calories.”

Such studies are also small and limited in scope. Actually, Appel says, the evidence is rather strong that most people will benefit from simply watching their sodium intake and living a heart-healthy lifestyle – including not smoking, getting regular exercise and maintaining a healthy weight.

Salt – or sodium – in people’s diets doesn’t come just from what they pour from a shaker. More than three-quarters of the sodium Americans eat is in the form of processed foods, making it necessary for people to read nutrition labels to accurately determine how much sodium is in the foods they’re eating.

Beth W. Orenstein is a freelance writer living in Northampton, Pa.



Veer

VA plans Colorado ‘superclinic’

VA is planning a new, 76,000-square-foot community-based outpatient clinic in downtown Colorado Springs, Colo.

The “superclinic” has more than double the space of the two current clinics it will replace. Scheduled to open in late 2014, the facility will provide veterans in the eastern Rocky Mountains region primary care, mental health care, specialty care and ancillary diagnostic services, as well as a dedicated area for the completion of benefit and compensation exams.

Combined with the surgical services available at the Air Force Academy just outside Colorado Springs, the new clinic promises veterans a more complete package of medical care.

**Pick-me-ups**

Can’t seem to get over feeling tired? *Prevention* offers some quick solutions:

Start the day with a fiber-rich

breakfast. A recent Cardiff University study found that subjects who ate a high-fiber cereal in the morning “showed a 10 percent reduction in fatigue, lower incidence of depression and better cognitive skills.”

Space out your caffeine fixes. Try spreading your intake throughout the day. “Miniservings of caffeine (8 ounces of coffee or less) every few hours keep you awake, alert and focused.”

Eat often, but not a lot. “Eating small meals frequently throughout the day – every three to four hours – helps keep your blood sugar up, so you don’t experience energy crashes or get so ravenous that you overeat.”

Go green. Texas A&M researchers found that volunteers who kept flowers on their desks or green plants elsewhere in the office had more creative ideas to offer.

Drink water.

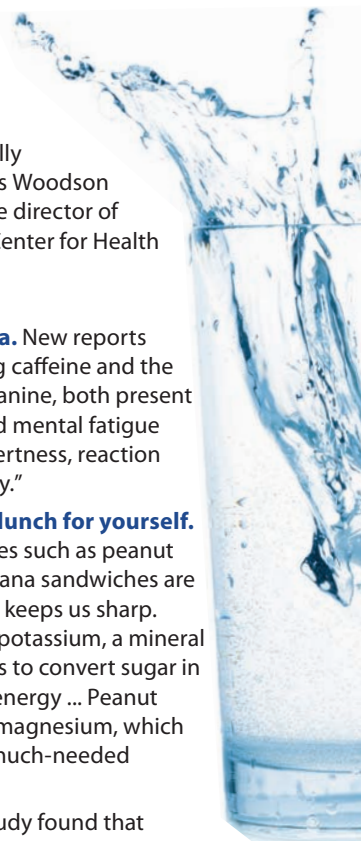
“Half the people who come to me complaining of fatigue are actually dehydrated,” says Woodson Merrell, executive director of the Continuum Center for Health and Healing in New York.

Take time for tea. New reports claim that pairing caffeine and the amino acid L-theanine, both present in tea, “decreased mental fatigue and improved alertness, reaction time and memory.”

Pack your kids’ lunch for yourself.

Brown-bag staples such as peanut butter-and-banana sandwiches are full of stuff that keeps us sharp. “Bananas pack potassium, a mineral your body needs to convert sugar in your blood into energy ... Peanut butter is high in magnesium, which gives your cells much-needed energy.”

Tune in. “One study found that employees who wore headphones while they worked were 10 percent more productive than without them.”



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DEAFNESS INSTITUTE SOUNDS OFF ON HEARING DAMAGE

From street traffic to the personal stereo plugged into your ears, life is often noisy – and that can be bad news for your hearing. An estimated 22 million adults have permanent hearing damage from noise exposure, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Whether or not noise harms your hearing depends on the loudness, pitch and length of time you are exposed.

Using noisy power tools without ear protection just a few times can permanently damage hearing. So can a few loud rock concerts.

Noise is too loud if you can't hear someone speaking from fewer than two feet away, or if you have to shout to be heard above noise. Your stereo headset is too loud if someone other than you can hear it.

To protect your hearing, wear ear plugs when riding motorcycles and snowmobiles, operating a lawn mower or leaf blower, or any time you are exposed to noise for a long period. When operating noisy power tools, wear ear protection.

Discover which sounds are too loud using an interactive sound ruler:

www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/pages/sound-ruler.aspx

Sounds louder than 85 decibels (db) can cause permanent hearing damage. A sampling of some common noises and their decibel levels:

Fireworks from three feet away	150 db
Jackhammer	130 db
Personal stereos (MP3 players), maximum output	110 db
Hand drill	100 db
Passing motorcycle	100 db
Blow-dryer or kitchen blender	80 to 90 db
Busy traffic	70 db
Dishwasher or clothes dryer	60 db
Moderate rainfall	50 db
Whisper	30 db



Veer

American life expectancy on decline

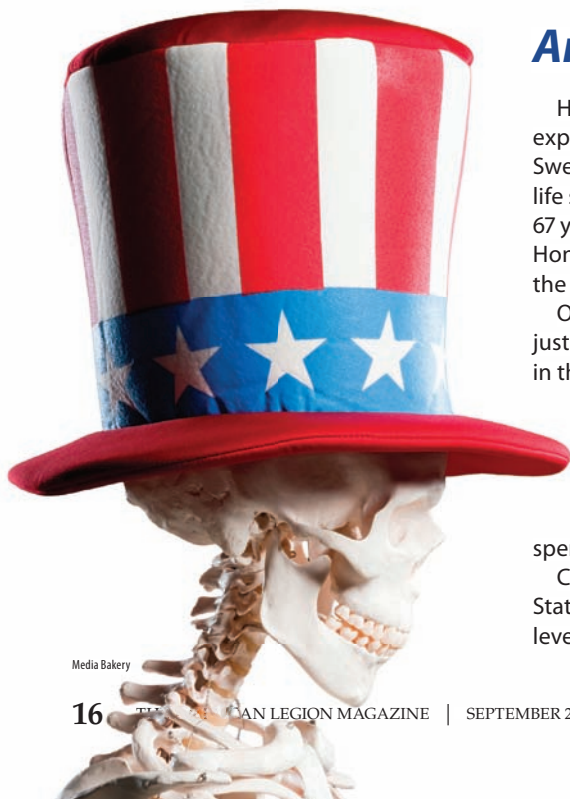
HealthDay reports that 80 percent of U.S. counties lag behind life expectancy in other wealthy, industrialized nations such as Australia, Canada, Sweden and Japan. Adults in five Mississippi counties have the lowest average life span among Americans – less than 74.5 years for women and less than 67 years for men. In those counties, life spans for women are lower than in Honduras and El Salvador, and the numbers for men trail those of Brazil and the Philippines.

Overall, life expectancy for American women is 80.8 years, good enough for just 33rd in the world. Life expectancy for American men is 75.6 years, or 36th in the world.

"Life expectancy in some areas of the United States is actually decreasing, whereas it's increasing in the world's 10 leading nations," according to the HealthDay report.

"There's really no reason we can't keep pace with those other countries," says Christopher Murray, the study's lead researcher. "We spend more on health care. We have the best health research in the world."

Contributing factors for lower – or declining – life expectancy in the United States include tobacco use, obesity, high blood pressure and high blood sugar levels.



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Law speeds job licensing for veterans

BY TOM PHILPOTT

Tens of thousands of veterans will begin to see their military training and experience count toward obtaining federal licenses needed to land similar jobs in the private sector or with the federal government, thanks to the recent passage of the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act of 2012.

For The American Legion, it was a sudden victory for skilled veterans achieved only after a 17-year push, explained Steve L. Gonzalez, assistant director of the Legion's National Economic Division.

The lawmaker credited with carrying the ball across the legislative goal line is Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Calif. Denham served 16 years in the Air Force, both active duty and reserve, and continually trained as a tactical aircraft maintenance specialist.

Yet when he left the service, Denham was told he had to go to school for three years to be able to do the same job in the private sector. On a visit to Afghanistan, Denham said he heard the same kind of complaint from servicemembers preparing to return to civilian life.

So in March, coordinating with the Legion, Denham introduced H.R. 4155 with co-sponsor Rep. Tim Walz, DFL-Minn. Their bill requires federal agencies that issue licenses to consider any veteran trained in the same field to have received instruction enough to meet federal requirements, unless the agency head determines that the in-service training is substantially different than what the license requires.

The timing couldn't have been better given that this is an election year, with both Congress and the Obama administration searching for ways to lower unemployment among veterans.

The House and Senate unanimously passed the bill, and the president signed it into law July 23. Within 180 days, agencies are to have regulations in place to help skilled veterans obtain licenses for which they might qualify. Federal agencies are said to issue between 80 and 100 licenses relevant to military training. These agencies include the

Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Coast Guard.

Veterans who are expected to benefit from the law include military air-traffic controllers, aircraft mechanics and technicians, flight engineers, hospital corpsmen, ship or boat captains, radio operators, ship engineers, physician assistants and medical technicians.

Seven states have similar laws to help veterans transition to jobs for which they have trained. The federal law is expected to encourage more states to recognize military training in granting licenses and certificates.

In 1996, the Legion conducted a study on how veterans with military training faced time-consuming and costly roadblocks to have that experience count for federal and state certification or licensure to use their skills as civilians. The enormous costs

to society were noted, Gonzalez said. The Legion also argued that veterans were wasting GI Bill benefits on courses nearly identical to training they'd already received.

Over the years, DoD withheld support for job-transition bills, worried that career force retention would suffer. That has begun to change, given the sacrifices endured by veterans leaving service today after multiple deployments to Iraq or Afghanistan. Gonzalez said another factor has been more intense training to enhance force professionalism. The new level of training has made it harder for agencies not to recognize what servicemembers can bring to civilian careers.

DoD officials are now "doing great work" to smooth the transition process for these veterans, Gonzalez said, including working with other federal agencies, outside organizations and industry to lower licensing hurdles.

Tom Philpott, a former Coast Guardsman, has written about veterans and military personnel issues for more than 30 years.



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ROBOT WARS

*For decades, military planners predicted a day
when machines would fight America's battles.
Welcome to the future.*

BY BEN BARBER



All through the night in Pakistan's tribal regions, people hear a humming like that of bees. But the source of the sound has a sting far more deadly: American drones – or as the military calls them, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAVs).

Nearly 300 times since 2004, drones have attacked al-Qaida, the Taliban, Hizb-i-Islami, the Haqqani network, and other terrorists who target U.S. troops, civilians and allies.

Leading a new wave of robotic vehicles increasingly used by the U.S. military since 9/11, the Predator and other UAVs can carry Hellfire missiles and hover over their targets for a day or more without refueling. Equipped with high-powered surveillance gear, they transmit video and photos to pilots in Nevada trailers who control the flight, analyze the images, follow up on suspects and make the call on when to fire.



Photo courtesy iRobot.com

Robots took off as a tool of war following 9/11, especially once terrorists who planned the attack from Afghanistan slipped into ungoverned Pakistani tribal areas. The idea of U.S. boots on the ground was rejected by Pakistan – which was extremely upset at the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011 – so robotic vehicles have been useful in tracking and attacking al-Qaida and other groups, with Pakistan’s quiet approval.

Even though lethally armed drones can navigate across thousands of miles and track enemies, they cannot fire on targets. Only a human controller can do that.

In the post-9/11 wars, drones have proven highly effective but with an important drawback. They have sparked anti-American sentiment among Pakistanis and others who see them as an unfair way to dominate and cause civilian casualties.

Since 2007, 164 drone strikes have killed 964 terrorists – 793 locals and 171 foreigners, according to Maj. Gen. Ghayur Mehmood, the Pakistani commander in the North Waziristan tribal area adjacent to Afghanistan.

As the U.S. military relies more on drones to carry out missions, the ethics of using them to take out suspected enemies have been questioned. In 2011, drone strikes in Yemen killed U.S.-born al-Qaida militant Anwar al-Awlaki, his 16-year-old son Abdulrahman, and Samir Khan, a naturalized U.S. citizen who moved to Yemen in 2009 and worked on an English-language al-Qaida magazine. Relatives of the slain men filed suit in U.S. District Court in Washington, claiming that the strike violated U.S. legal guarantees, including due process and the right to a trial.

Meanwhile, drones aren’t the only robots putting the heat on America’s enemies.

Small ground crawlers called Throwbots or First Look weigh fewer than five pounds and can be hurled through the window of a house. Once inside, they transmit video images and can cruise from room to room – and even navigate stairs – to pinpoint threats for soldiers outside.

Small helicopters about the size of a loaf of bread are carried into battle by troops who send them up to peer over ridges and buildings to locate the enemy.

QinetiQ makes a robot that moves on tracks; it’s the size of a big dog and can send back images of threats it encounters, unleash tear gas, and fire a machine gun and grenade launcher.



MQ-1B Predator

As part of an unmanned aircraft system, the Predator can be disassembled, loaded into a container and deployed for worldwide operations. Its capabilities include intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, close air support, target acquisition and precision strikes. U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Sabrina Johnson



MQ-8B Fire Scout

The Fire Scout is the Navy’s drone helicopter, able to operate from any aviation-capable warship and offering unprecedented situational awareness and precision target support. Weapons carried include Hellfire missiles, Viper Strike glide weapons and laser-guided folding-fin rockets.

Photo courtesy Northrop Grumman

Ohio factory reborn; 250 new hires for EdenPURE® portable heaters

New models shipped direct from warehouse at up to 49% savings

Richard Karn, North Canton, Ohio

I was fortunate enough to attend the grand opening of the new EdenPURE® factory in North Canton, Ohio. The new plant brought hundreds of new jobs back to Ohio and reversed the common practice of sending Midwest manufacturing jobs to China. Now, EdenPURE® continues to ramp up production for the coming Winter with exciting new models and hundreds of new employees as this Made in America success story continues to grow.

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Now readers can save up to 49% (\$192 the largest savings ever on new EdenPURE®s). EdenPURE® is not just the best-selling portable heating system in North America. As an EdenPURE® owner I rank EdenPURE® #1 for quality, safety and efficiency. And now is the perfect time to save like never before on our expanded 2013 EdenPURE® line made in our brand new North Canton, Ohio facility.

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The EdenPURE® Personal Heater now heats a larger area, an increase from 350 square feet to

Never be cold again



As Al Borland on Home Improvement I was the man with all the answers. However, as Richard Karn I still look for money saving and efficient heating in my home. I have an EdenPURE® Infrared Portable Heater in my California home and like millions of others found it to be a super-safe, reliable source of portable heat all year long.

500 square feet. That's a 30% increase in efficiency! And EdenPURE® is proud to introduce the 2013 Model 750. The new Model 750 is perfect for larger areas and heats up to 750 square feet. But the best thing about the Model 750 is the price. We priced the Model 750 at only \$50 above the Personal Heater. This means you receive a 33% increase in performance for only \$50. That's American engineering at its best!

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Super Safe Infrared Heat

Now remember, a major cause of residential fires in the United States is carelessness and faulty portable heaters. The choice of fire and safety professionals like Captain Mike Hornby, the EdenPURE® has no exposed heating elements that can cause a fire. That's why grandparents and parents love the EdenPURE®.

The outside of the EdenPURE® only gets warm to the touch so that it will not burn children or pets. And your pet may be just like my dog who has reserved a favorite spot near the EdenPURE®. You see the EdenPURE® uses infrared heat. And just as pets enjoy basking in a beam of sunlight they try to stay close to EdenPURE®'s "bone-warming" infrared heat.

The Secret is in the Copper

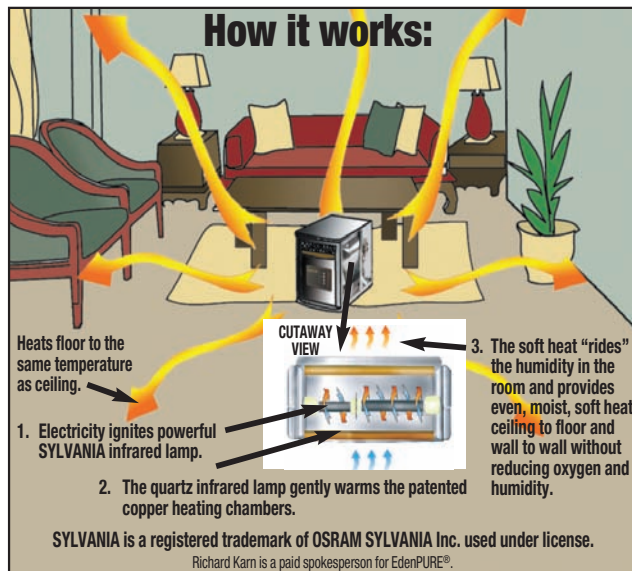
EdenPURE®'s EdenFLOW technology uses copper heating chambers to take the energy provided by our special SYLVANIA bulbs and distribute our famous soft heat evenly throughout the room. Now our copper isn't ordinary. It's 99.9% pure antimicrobial copper from an over 150 year old American owned company in Pennsylvania. So your EdenPURE® heater is continuously pushing soft, healthy, infrared heat throughout your room.

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iRobot 510

One of the world's most successful battle-tested robots, the iRobot 510 PacBot performs search, reconnaissance, bomb disposal and other missions for U.S. troops and first responders. Photos courtesy iRobot.com



Tom Gramaglia, vice president of the Massachusetts-based iRobot, said his company sold to the U.S. military, for use in Iraq and Afghanistan, 3,500 PacBots – tracked vehicles that can find and disarm improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Each PacBot costs \$150,000.

iRobot has also sold 800 larger robotic vehicles called Warriors, each weighing nearly 400 pounds with 10-foot-long retractable arms. The Warriors were initially sold to the nuclear industry, and two have been working in Japan on the nuclear reactors damaged in last year's tsunami. The company also has a civilian side; it has sold 7 million robots

that vacuum and wash floors, helping iRobot reach \$450 million in sales.

War planners are eager to invest in robotic systems because they save lives – at least on the American side of the conflict. Plus, robots can monitor dangerous areas for days, while U.S. fighter jets have just enough fuel to circle for a few hours before they need midair refueling or a return to a carrier or base.

“We do get letters from people who say, ‘Save a life and send a robot,’” Gramaglia says. “Or they say, ‘I did not have to write a letter (telling families of a battle death) because I could send a robot. It was blown up, but we saved a soldier’s life.’”

Michael Toscano, president and CEO of the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), discounts fears that robots could be hijacked by hackers, or go rogue and make decisions that could pose a threat – something like HAL in the film “2001: A Space Odyssey.” Take the Predator, he says; it takes 166 people to control four of them.

“The machine does not fire the weapon,” says Toscano, who spent 20 years managing the Joint Robotics Program at the Pentagon. He points out that in 2010, the Air Force graduated more pilots to control unmanned vehicles than to fly planes.



Photo courtesy of iRobot.com



iRobot 710 Warrior

Designed for explosive ordnance disposal, reconnaissance and surveillance missions, the 710 Warrior can lift up to 220 pounds and carry loads of 150 pounds over rough terrain. Photos courtesy iRobot.com

The grandfather of robotic air systems was Burt Rutan, who built Voyager, a plane his brother Richard and partner Jeana Yeager flew nonstop around the world in 1986. Voyager can be seen hanging in the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, its sleek design having inspired the look of many of today's robotic craft.

Testing for a better drone continues apace. In March, Washington radio broadcasts told listeners not to be worried if they see something resembling Batman's plane flying overhead – it's the new X-47 drone Northrop Grumman is building for the Navy, expected to be in service in 2015.

In 2011, DoD requested \$6.1 billion for unmanned aerial vehicle systems, and was expected to seek \$30.8 billion between 2011 and 2015, according to the Teal Group and AUVSI.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) plans to employ drones in tracking drug smuggling in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, doubling the number of square miles covered by nine DHS drones used on the northern and southwestern borders. Farther afield, drones patrol and sometimes attack terrorist and narcotics targets in Somalia, Kenya, Yemen, Mali, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other countries. Their main use abroad



X-47

In 2011, the Navy's unmanned combat air system demonstration aircraft completed its first flight in cruise mode. The X-47 is the first unmanned vehicle designed to take off and land from an aircraft carrier. Photo courtesy Northrop Grumman

seems to be in countries that openly, or behind closed doors, permit U.S. drone flights and attacks because they lack the means to fight terrorists.

In short, drones have become standard in the fight against terrorists overseas, and are quickly becoming commonplace at home. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) estimates that 10,000 drones could be flying U.S. skies by 2017.

In February, President Barack Obama signed a law allowing wider use of drones inside U.S. airspace, previously off-limits due to civil aviation safety concerns. Since Jan. 1, the FAA has granted more than 200 authorizations to federal, state and local government entities – as well as to law-enforcement agencies and academic institutions – to fly drones, the Government Accountability Office’s Gerald Dillingham told the House Homeland Security Oversight Committee in July.

Opposition to domestic drones has come from airline pilots, air-safety officials and civil libertarians who fear government-sanctioned spying on citizens’ activities and private property. Nevertheless, inside the United States, drones are increasingly used for border surveillance, fighting fires, managing wildlife, predicting floods, and patrolling nuclear reactors and other sensitive sites.

“There’s no stopping this technology,” Peter Singer, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, told CBS News in April. “Anybody who thinks they can put this genie back in the box – that’s silliness. They’re technologies that not only give you capabilities that you couldn’t have imagined a generation earlier. But they’re also technologies that cause questions that you weren’t asking yourself a generation earlier.” 🌿

Ben Barber has been a journalist for 30 years. His articles have been published in The Washington Times, USA Today, the London Observer and McClatchy newspapers. His book, “GROUNDTRUTH: The Third World at Work, Play and War,” will be published by de.Mo Design in 2012.



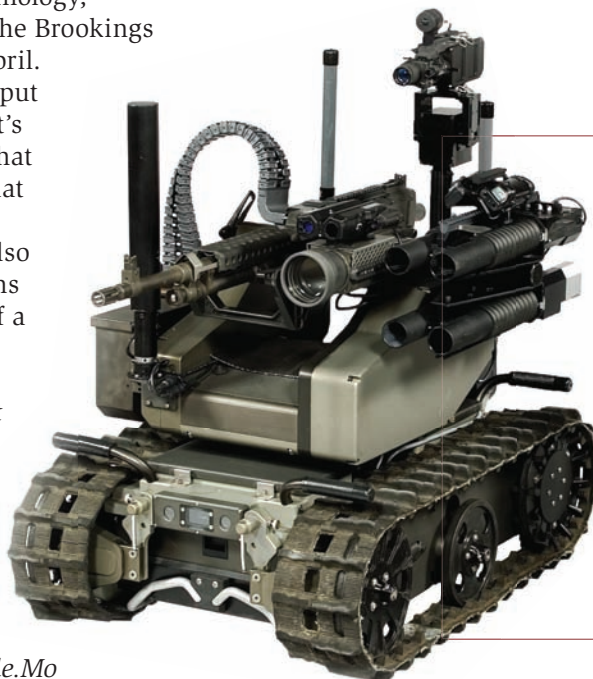
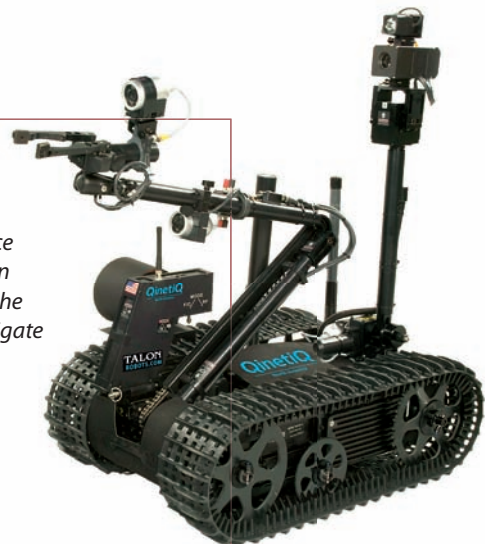
Dragon Runner

Developed as an urban warfare robot for the Marine Corps, the Dragon Runner is light enough to be carried in a Marine’s backpack and rugged enough to be thrown over walls, through windows and down stairs. The robot gives users the ability to see around corners and into tight spaces, and with add-ons can help bomb disposal experts find and deactivate IEDs. Photo courtesy QinetiQ.com

TALON

TALON robots have performed nearly 20,000 explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) missions in Iraq and Afghanistan in the past decade. Able to navigate almost any terrain, the TALON has been used in reconnaissance, combat, and search and recovery at Ground Zero after the 9/11 attacks.

Photo courtesy QinetiQ.com



Modular Advanced Armed Robotic System (MAARS)

A member of the TALON family, MAARS is an unmanned ground vehicle equipped with day and night cameras, motion detectors, a hostile fire-detection system and siren. It can also be fitted with nonlethal grenades, grenade launchers, machine guns and other weapons. Photo courtesy QinetiQ.com



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FACT: 1 in 3 adults 65+ fall each year, and falls are the leading cause of injury death as well as the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.**

*BAKALAR, NICHOLAS. "Watch Your Step While Washing Up." New York Times 16, Aug. 2011, New York Edition ed., Section D sec.: D7. Web **CDC - Center for Disease Control and Prevention



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ONE VETERAN AT A TIME

American Legion service officers work at an op-tempo unseen in decades, doing all they can to help veterans plow through the backlog of unresolved claims.

You find them tucked away in federal office complexes, their desks snowed over with government forms and file folders. They live on the phone. They're always online. They're waiting for faxes, checking calendars, thumbing through regulations and mentally preparing for the next appointment, which won't be like the last, because every veteran they meet represents a unique set of problems. They work late and on weekends because there's far more to do than time to do it, and because families depend on their life-changing assistance. Most people don't even know they exist.

Across the United States, more than 2,500 specially trained and accredited American Legion service officers help veterans and their families understand government benefits and how to apply for them. "There should be 10,000," says Jay Walsh of Louisiana, a dean in this elite corps of advocates. "What do department service officers do? You name it. We do that."

Foremost, service officers help veterans and families file applications for VA benefits. The process is complicated, and one mistake in one field of any form can tie up a claim for months, adding to VA's gargantuan backlog of unresolved cases. American Legion service officers help applicants gather the right supporting documents, fill out and submit forms correctly, and understand the options when VA's decisions are issued. "It's easier to deny than it is to approve," Walsh says.



Louisiana Department Service Officer Jay Walsh says the key to a successful VA benefits claim is a complete application form, and help from an American Legion accredited service officer.

Matthew Hinton photo

“But if it’s a complete claim, it’s going to go smoother and reduce the possibility of VA sending it back for more work. The key is to submit a complete claim that VA can’t deny.”

Denials, which lead to appeals, and remands, in which VA requires additional documentation before a decision is issued, are among many contributors to the backlog – i.e., cases that have not been wrapped up within 125 days of application. In July, VA had an estimated 920,000 benefits claims in process, over half of which were 125 days or more old, even though the department has completed more than 1 million a year for the past two years and is on track to break another performance record by the end of 2012. Unfortunately, even at that rate, VA continues to lose ground against the number of incoming cases. The system grows more strained as Iraq and Afghanistan veterans separate from active duty, often with multiple health-care conditions from their combat experiences, and as the Vietnam generation ages and looks to VA for help handling medical costs or files for previously unavailable benefits related to Agent Orange exposure.

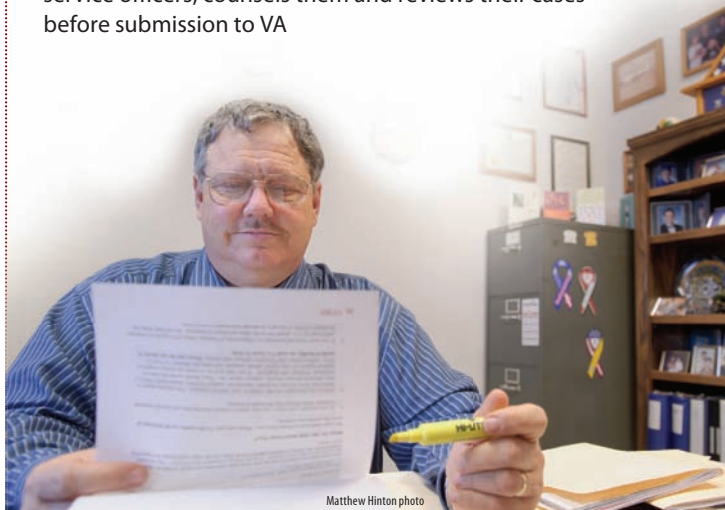
The backlog has been a source of frustration for VA since the late 1990s. Dr. James Peake, one of three different VA secretaries during the George W. Bush administration, in 2008 described VA claims

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Advocates at all levels

THE DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER

- Specially trained and accredited
- Qualified to obtain power of attorney for veterans whose personal information is necessary to file for benefits
- Required to stay up to date and knowledgeable about veterans benefits, health care and claims processing
- Represents veterans free of charge, from initial application through the appeals process
- Commonly advocates for county, district or municipal service officers, counsels them and reviews their cases before submission to VA



Matthew Hinton photo

Legion offices across the country quietly tackle special cases

Less visible than The American Legion’s network of service officers are Legion-staffed offices in Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Winston-Salem, N.C., and St. Paul, Minn., that handle specific types of claims at the national and regional levels.

The Legion helps active-duty personnel with benefits delivery at discharge (BDD) claims in Salt Lake City and Winston-Salem, while St. Paul’s focus is VA overpayment. Philadelphia works on issues related to VA life insurance policies and non-service-connected disability claims.

Hans Michalke, an Army retiree and former Utah department service officer, sees more than 80 new BDD claims (application for VA benefits prior to separation) go through his office each month. The Salt Lake City office gets all the BDD claims with Legion power of attorney west of the Mississippi River. Winston-Salem gets the eastern half.

Michalke’s job is to make sure they are in order before they are reviewed by VA. “I try to catch as many mistakes as possible so it doesn’t have to come down to an appeal. And sometimes, after VA adjudicates and denies the claim, I will review it again and try to find something that VA did wrong. I have a great working relationship with the VA folks here, so I can walk a claim up to them and say, ‘Hey, here’s something I think you might have missed.’”

Lakeisha Bracey, who works for the Legion in Winston-

Salem, has a similar rapport. The Army veteran started with the Legion in 2008 after working for VA. “I had a pretty well-rounded knowledge of BDD, and I also was able to see some of the difficulties veterans had in filing their claims,” she says. “This job gave me an opportunity to help those veterans from the other side of the process.”

Bracey deals with about 85 cases a week, many for troops who don’t understand the slow pace of the process. “Some are pretty irate,” she says. “I try to calm them down. I also let them know everything what’s going on and try to be supportive as possible. A lot of times they just want to know an actual person is working on their claim.”

In St. Paul, Julie Larsen, a 34-year employee of The American Legion, serves as a liaison in overpayment cases. Common issues involve VA compensation for disability pensions or education benefits to someone who has failed to accurately report income, assets or a change in marital or dependent status. “People start to work and fail to report it, or they get married, or a dependent child moves out of the home,” Larsen says. “They either don’t tell or forget to tell VA. Most of the time, it’s simply an oversight or not knowing.”

Larsen says VA usually gives veterans between 30 and 60 days to respond or cover the overpayment. If there’s no response, benefits are suspended.

To a veteran or a family, the differences between accredited full-time American Legion service officers and volunteers willing and able to help may be confusing. Some volunteers, such as John Cloud (page 34), are well-trained and experienced after careers as professional service officers. Others, who are not accredited, are important providers of information and referrals. Here is a look at the different levels of service officers.

THE COUNTY/DISTRICT/CITY SERVICE OFFICER

- Provides free-of-charge, one-on-one service for veterans and their families to help them understand and pursue government benefits, from GI Bill eligibility to disability claims application to survivor benefits after a death
- Usually works in coordination with, if not directly for, the department service officer
- Must be extremely well-versed in VA benefits changes, medical conditions and case law
- Training programs, accreditation and passage of VA tests are usually mandatory
- Helps veterans to understand the claims process, collect necessary documents and submit applications
- Assists veterans and their families with the actual fulfillment of government application forms and provides guidance on decisions
- Communicates with local veterans groups to ensure adequate awareness of benefits and availability of help

THE POST SERVICE OFFICER

- Works on a volunteer basis, free of charge
- Explains the benefits claims process to veterans, offers checklists of documents commonly needed to prepare a case before meeting with an accredited service officer
- Refers veterans and their families to accredited service officers within their state or area
- Conducts local outreach efforts to build awareness of VA benefits, department service officers and free services to help in the application process
- Does not assume power of attorney or file claims on behalf of veterans and their families unless accredited



"A lot of times they just want to know an actual person is working on their claim."

Lakeisha Bracey, Winston-Salem, N.C., BDD office

"It can ruin someone's credit," Larsen says. "What this office does is try to set up a manageable payment plan or reduced payment amount."

Gil LaVerda, a Legion employee of more than 30 years, reviews and processes between 600 and 800 of six VA-administered insurance policies from his office in Philadelphia: United States Government Life Insurance, National Service Life Insurance, Veterans Special Life Insurance, Veterans Reopened Insurance, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance.

LaVerda checks for details such as eligibility for disability waivers, or if additional benefits are available. "There are a lot of cracks they can fall through, so I try to make sure that doesn't happen," he says. "I focus on the veterans eligible for waivers, because veterans who are working and have a minor disability rating really don't need me once their insurance is approved."

Because the insurance program has a much higher level

of automation, LaVerda also spends his days helping John Katz, who deals with non-service-connected disability claims – a benefit paid to wartime veterans with limited income who are no longer able to work. Manila folders are stacked deep around his desk. His monthly workload consists of some 200 claims, along with 20 or more daily emails and dozens of phone calls. Of the Philadelphia VA Regional Office's 158,478 pending cases, the Legion has power of attorney on more than 27,000. "We are swamped," Katz says. "Our office is too popular. I need to respond to all the questions I get, and I also spend an hour or so a day triaging all incoming mail. The rest of the time is pushing out paperwork."

Katz, who spent 20 years as a department service officer before he moved to the Philadelphia office, is responsible for making sure that non-service-connected disability claims are ready to go on to VA. "I act primarily as an advocate," he says. "I make sure all the basic info is there, along with the evidence they need to receive their benefit."

"I had a guy who had no money coming in and no way to pay the rent. He was looking for some way to put food on the table, and he didn't see any light at the end of the tunnel. We're here to help those people."

– Steve Brooks

State relationship helps Minnesota service officers cover ground

Jeremy Wolfsteller isn't sure he could stand to spend every day in the office plowing through the paperwork necessary to help veterans file claims for VA benefits. Thanks to a time-tested arrangement between The American Legion's Department of Minnesota and the state's Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), he doesn't have to.

Since 1943, the state and the Legion have worked together to help veterans understand their benefits and file for them. The MDVA office, staffed largely by veterans who are American Legion members, handles the claims application process, allowing the department service officers – Wolfsteller and Tom Newman – to perform outreach to veterans and their families.

"This arrangement really frees up my time to do so many other things, like Heroes to Hometowns and providing information on education benefits," says Wolfsteller, a service-disabled Army veteran and member of Post 1982 in St. Paul. "It also allows me to raise awareness among our veterans about Minnesota programs such as the State Soldiers Assistance Program. It lets me get out there and work with veterans, where I feel I can really make a difference."

Meanwhile, MDVA handled more than 11,000 cases in fiscal year 2012, including power-of-attorney transfers, along with state and federal benefits claims. In May, the office handled 925 claims – cases that the office in St. Paul will work through the decision process, all the way to the Board of Veterans' Appeals if necessary.

"There is unbelievable cooperation between the state

and The American Legion, and it's been that way for decades," says Ron Quade, MDVA's director of claims and outreach and a member of Post 45 in New Prague. "And all of it is based upon a handshake agreement. We don't have a contract with the Legion. I think we've been able to avoid the bureaucracy that often gets in the way of progress."

The MDVA office has 12 claims representatives that can handle a heavy caseload with speed, efficiency and compassion. "We try to be proactive for veterans, rather than reactive," says Rolando Sotolongo, claims office supervisor and a member of Post 99 in Minneapolis. "We want to do everything we can for our veterans."

For training, employees go through a mentorship program within the office and spend a month in Washington with national staff in the Legion's appeals office.

"This relationship is set up so that we can learn from each other," Quade says. "We try to perpetuate a constant learning environment. It's mutually beneficial and benefits our veterans. It gives Legion service officers the ability to go do outreach efforts. There are folks all over the state carrying

the Legion flag when they're doing this. And when we go to a legislation hearing here and ask for something that we need, and half the room is full of Legionnaires, that's pretty powerful."

The arrangement gives Wolfsteller a chance to do what he loves. "I can get out there for veterans and be taking our Legion programs to them," he says.

"That's because of this great partnership."

– Steve Brooks

"We try to perpetuate a constant learning environment. It's mutually beneficial, and in turn benefits our veterans."

Ron Quade,

MDVA's director of claims and outreach

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

processing as "... a 1945 benefit, 1945 process, around a 1945 family unit. We need to change it."

At the Legion's 92nd National Convention in Milwaukee in 2010, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki made a vow to "break the back of the backlog this year." To do that, VA hired more than 3,300 new employees to process claims and employed advanced computer technology to speed things up. Despite such efforts, the primary criticism about the system remains that it is largely paper-based, susceptible to human error and mired in bureaucracy.

VA Undersecretary for Benefits Allison Hickey now circles 2015 as the target year to break the backlog. She announced this summer a new processing model expected to increase performance by 150,000 to 200,000 claims per year. "Our redesigned model follows comprehensive

planning and testing to ensure we have the right recipe for success," she said in July.

In the meantime, American Legion service officers are plowing through the problem one veteran and family at a time. "We do what we can on our end, but we can't stop the roadblock on VA's end," says Dave Holcomb, an accredited service officer in Jefferson Parish, La., who chose this career because, he says, he was "tired of seeing veterans get hung up in the bureaucracy."

"Nothing replaces one on one," Walsh says. "And if you're going to work one on one, you'd better be well-trained. Every case is different. That is why you have to know what you are doing."

Different states have different employment arrangements for service officers. They may be American Legion department employees. They may be state, county or city employees. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

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Whatever it takes to help

To anyone except John Cloud, the Vietnam veteran's case was hopeless. Johnny Pryor had gone AWOL three times, tried to kill himself twice, spent months in the stockade and was booted out of the Army. VA would never grant his claim. "We don't take guys with bad discharges," says Cloud, who has worked as a veterans service officer for nearly four decades. "I took him."

Cloud soon learned that Pryor came home from combat to face his grandfather's death, his parents' divorce and his longtime girlfriend's marriage to another man while Pryor had been clearing jungle and dodging enemy bullets. Friends who had gone to college to avoid the draft soon avoided Pryor. The public was hostile.

"He came home from Vietnam to the whole gamut," Cloud says. "He wasn't in his right mind, or he wouldn't have tried to commit suicide."

Eight years, two appeals and untold hours of paperwork later, Cloud won Pryor a better discharge and VA benefits based on an obscure 1940s law that gives veterans a break if they were mentally unstable when they committed the act that led to their bad discharge.

"Nobody else read my file," Pryor says. "John Cloud took me under his wing and treated me with respect. He's helped me every day since I met him."

That's how Cloud built a distinguished 35-year career with the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) before retiring and becoming a volunteer service officer for American Legion Post 1 in Tulsa and the local VA Vet Center.

"People hunt for him," says Sandra Oxford, manager of the Tulsa Vet Center. "They won't let anybody else help them."

The Brushhoff. John Wayne Cloud served as an Army dog handler in Vietnam, walking point "for whatever outfit needed us." He was drawn to veterans advocacy as a result of the brushhoff he and his cousin received when they went to VA in 1969 to sign up for their GI Bill benefits. "We walked into that office, and there was a griping old federal worker who said, 'All you Vietnam veterans want is something for nothing,'" Cloud says. "I told myself if I ever was in that kind of a position, I wouldn't treat people that way."

He earned a degree at what is now Northeastern State University and then bounced between oil-field and ranch jobs. He answered an ad for a service officer job at ODVA and started work in 1975 as a fieldman, helping veterans along a small-town circuit in southeastern Oklahoma. His ODVA career next took him to Muskogee, and by 1980 he was based in Tulsa.

Two years later, Cloud was looking for a new job. State wages were stagnant because of the oil bust, and he was exhausted from dealing with VA. "It was like a secret society you were fighting every day," he says. "You were just beating your head against the wall with claims. And you'd go down to the hospital, and they wouldn't even give you an aspirin."

Cloud changed his mind about quitting after he found a poem lying next to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the 1982 dedication of the Wall. "The poem talks about the Wall and the names and said, 'Make sure we didn't die in vain. We died so you could make a difference.'"

That was all he needed. "I thought, 'I'm right where I need to be.'"

Tens of Thousands of Claims and Counting. Cloud has provided assistance for three generations in some families. He's known for visiting homeless shelters, jails and any other places where veterans are in need. He prepared more than 80 emergency financial assistance applications in two days for veterans whose homes were damaged by the 1984 tornado in Mannford, Okla. Even VA employees seek Cloud's help filing claims – on behalf of their parents. Any notion of stopping, paycheck or not, is out of the question. "John thought he was going to retire – that was funnier than ever," says Sandra Oxford of the Tulsa Vet Center. She recruited him as a volunteer after he left ODVA in March 2010, and Post 1 coaxed him into becoming a volunteer service officer.

When Cloud arrives at Post 1 on a spring morning, the lobby is filled with veterans waiting to see him.

Two need help filing claims for hearing loss. One doesn't have money to pay his water bill. Air Force veteran Thurman Phillips – the fifth or sixth visitor of the morning – walks into the cluttered, wood-paneled office, lowers himself into the chair before Cloud's desk, leans in and says, "Can you call about my claim? I haven't heard anything for a year."

Cloud soon determines that Phillips' claim for PTSD and ischemic heart disease is buried in VA's bureaucratic snarl. "It went back to the rating specialist, and there it sits," Cloud says after hanging up the telephone. "If you don't hear by the end of April, we may have to go to the congressman to get this off high center."

Cloud works the telephone, asks veterans questions, fills out claim forms, digs through his briefcase and scans the pink phone-message slips accumulating on his desk. He takes a quick break to help a veteran's wife who needs provisions from the post's food pantry until her husband is well enough to work. And then he goes right back to his desk to deal with the veterans still waiting to see him.



John Wayne Cloud, a Vietnam War combat veteran, takes time away from his appointment book to help with the post's food pantry.



Now a volunteer post service officer, after a 35-year career as a professional, Cloud works as much as ever, helping veterans and families apply for benefits and offering assistance in the Tulsa County Veterans Treatment Court.

Brandi Simons photos

By noon, he has met with nearly a dozen veterans, putting to work his knowledge as a claims expert, talent as a counselor and passion as an advocate.

"John kept me encouraged," says Cornelious Henderson, clutching a lime-green file folder with "Board of Veterans Appeals" written across the front. "I thank God for that." He enlisted Cloud in his fight to get VA to upgrade his disability rating for the wear and tear he endured during his airborne career, including two tours in Vietnam.

"I had a lot of people at VA who had the gall to tell me they couldn't do anything for me," Henderson says. "If they had more men like John Wayne Cloud, more veterans would get their just due – not just their compensation but medical services."

Textbook Definition. Sleepless nights and haunted dreams followed Cloud home from combat, as they did for innumerable Vietnam veterans. His response was typical. "When I got my paycheck, it was down to the bar I went. (Then) I found a woman who straightened me out. I went back to college."

In December 2008, Cloud helped start the Tulsa County Veterans Treatment Court, where former members of the military undergo treatment, rather than go to jail, for many nonviolent offenses. Cloud is one of four service officers on hand every Monday afternoon at court to help defendants file VA claims and access treatment opportunities, housing, job-training and education programs.

"A lot of these troops come back and may not know services are available to them," says Tulsa County Veterans Treatment Court Judge David C. Youll, who served 23 years in the National Guard as a helicopter pilot. "Just getting hooked up with benefits they are entitled to has turned around a lot of lives."

Cloud mentors about 15 defendants at any one time. He takes their 2 a.m. phone calls when they need someone to talk to. He helps them find rides to treatment or, in severe cases, food and shelter until they get on their feet.

"Even in court – if he sees a vet getting agitated about something, he takes them out in the hall," says Matt Stiner, a Marine Corps Iraq veteran and director of the nonprofit Justice for Vets. He recruited Cloud to help start the Tulsa veterans court. "He instinctively knows this stuff."

Wilbur Lunsford, who sought Cloud's help with a hearing



claim, is one of the Tulsa court's success stories. He developed an attachment to alcohol about the same time he joined the Marines in the 1980s. The problem became severe after he returned to Oklahoma six years later. "Vodka was my favorite, but 100 proof wasn't doing it for me," he says. An arrest for marijuana landed him in Veterans Treatment Court.

Today, Lunsford has been clean and sober for three years, having graduated from the program in October 2011 and earning an associate degree in culinary arts in December. "If it wasn't for that program, I would have done my time, got out and got back in trouble," he says. "I probably would have ended up dead."

The next morning, Cloud goes to the Tulsa Vet Center and helps a widow sort through piles of paperwork to file for benefits she had no idea were available to her. That includes a claim to cover some of her husband's burial costs since he served 30 years in the Navy, including three tours in Vietnam, and died as a result of illnesses related to Agent Orange. "When in doubt, fill it out," Cloud says, breezing through one of the multipage forms. "That's been my policy for 40 years."

"I am so glad you came in today," he tells the widow. "We are going to get all this done today."

"John Cloud is the textbook definition of what it means to help veterans and their families," Stiner says. "He has shown me what one person can do to affect tens of thousands of people."

– Ken Olsen



American Legion Executive Director Peter Gaytan, a former director of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, addresses service officers school in Washington in February. Noel St. John photo

DSO schools keep advocates informed, united

Lannie Thomas has been an American Legion department service officer (DSO) in Michigan for nearly 30 years. In that time, he's had to fully understand hundreds of changes in the way VA operates, from administrative adjustments in the filing process to new laws that change eligibility for certain conditions. To stay current, Thomas has attended American Legion Department Service Officer schools since they began in 1984.

The twice-yearly training program – winter in Washington and summer in Indianapolis – keeps service officers informed about changes and provides a forum for them to exchange ideas and share best practices.

Both aspects of DSO school are critical, Thomas says. "Because of the changing environment of VA, we've had to change the way we do business. Thank goodness we've got a mechanism to keep us updated and motivated to stay on top of things and to hone our skills.

"We're all doing the same thing, so if I have an issue at my local office, I may call another office and ask them how their regional office is handling it. And if a veteran is being rated one way in one state, then it should be the same in my state. It's really important to exchange ideas with other states."

During the three-day school, service officers hear from Legion staff and VA officials during general sessions. They are briefed on topics such as Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC), medical legal advocacy and the

evaluation of traumatic brain injury (TBI). The school is split into three tracks – beginner, intermediate and advanced – along with smaller groups. Breakout sessions may include presentations on the medical and physical evaluation boards, claims development, benefits delivery at discharge, VA correspondence and Gulf War illness.

"Our hope is that through this school, we're giving (service officers) the most current information and the tools to help veterans receive the benefits they've earned," says former county service officer Rich Dumanacas, deputy director of the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division. "By bringing them here, we're saying that we're open to communication and that we're here for them. Through face-to-face communication, we're building a stronger relationship."

James Fialkowski, a Department of Wisconsin department service officer for more than five years, said his first trip to the school was a bit overwhelming a few years back, but now he sees the program as vital. "One, all the different reforms and changes to regulations in the past six months to a year, as well as all the updates (are covered)," he said. "I can take that information back to my staff. And all of my colleagues are here. I can glean from their knowledge and experiences. Now that I've done this for a few years, I feel like I can contribute."

– Steve Brooks

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

common thread is that they are trained at national American Legion service officer schools conducted twice a year, one in Indianapolis and another in Washington. Office space is usually provided on or near VA medical centers, regional offices or other government facilities.

Local American Legion post service officers are usually volunteers who provide general information and referrals to accredited professionals. In some cases, accredited service officers work on a volunteer basis after retirement just to help families get through the process. Some are not trained or accredited but represent veterans in their claims applications anyway, Walsh says, "and (they) put themselves in jeopardy. What they should do is

provide referrals to those who are trained and accredited."

Considering that the profession includes an ever-changing mix of law, medicine, psychology, accounting, marketing, administration and compassion – all free of charge to the client – the pay is modest at best for state-employed service officers. "Anyone who tells you they're getting rich being a service officer is pulling your leg," says Lannie Thomas, who has spent the last three decades as a Michigan department service officer. "But you get a chance to make things better for your brother or sister. That's why you do it."

"Most people take a job, and at 5 o'clock they're done with it," says Lakeisha Bracey, an American

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Legion representative who helps active-duty personnel file for VA benefits as they near discharge. “I can’t do that. These veterans served our country. They did what most won’t do, and so if I’m still working on their claim at 10 o’clock at night, I’ll do that.”

Jeremy Wolfsteller, an assistant department service officer in Minnesota and a service-connected disabled veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, entered the profession after his own pursuit of VA benefits. “I probably wouldn’t be here if I didn’t go through the process myself,” he says. “I’ve done it,

and now I want to be able to help others who are going through the same thing ... You don’t just see it as a job. You like to help them get answers. They come in discouraged or disappointed, and you can help them leave with a smile.”

“I love this work,” says James Topps, a department service officer in Michigan for the past 15 years. “You’re changing lives and bringing something to somebody in need. You have to be compassionate and caring about your fellow man.”

In the summer of 1919, before The American Legion had its first national convention, dozens of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40

‘A heart to serve’

Dennis Kubischta had no desire to become a veterans service officer. The man who called to offer him the job was vague about the details and then issued a warning: “Some days you’ll be doing this and wish you were doing something else.”

“I said, ‘That doesn’t sound too good,’” Kubischta recalls.

The man on the other end of the phone – chairman of county commissioners – made him the Steele County, N.D., veterans service officer anyway. Eighteen years later, they have both been proven wrong.

“I’ve loved every minute of this job,” says Kubischta, who is now part-time veterans service officer for both Steele and Griggs counties, as well as a full-time farmer.

Katrina Hodny, meanwhile, had no reservations about going to work for the Walsh County Veterans Service Office. “As a veteran and a Walsh County native, I felt I could do more for my fellow veterans,” she says of her decision to become a service officer after her discharge from the Army.

Kubischta and Hodny are making tremendous differences on behalf of veterans who leave the military, go back to the farm and never think they’re eligible for benefits, says Jim Deremo, the Legion’s department service officer in North Dakota. “They do a heck of a job out here for little pay,” he says. “A lot of vets can be thankful they are out there.”

Take Richard Bounds, for instance. He couldn’t understand why he suffered from liver and kidney failure when there was no history of such problems in his family. “There’s no rhyme or reason as to why I got sick,” he says.

Bounds mentioned it to Kubischta, with whom he’d served in the Marines in the 1970s. “Dennis worked tirelessly to solve this,” he says. “I would call him at least once a week requesting updates. He would even answer while combining on his farm. The only time he put me on hold was when he needed to turn the machine to start another row of crops.”

Kubischta consulted with Deremo and determined that Bounds had been stationed at a Marine Corps base with toxic-waste problems. They filed a claim on Bounds’ behalf in May 2011. VA approved it nine months later.

“What Dennis and Jim did for me – and what The American Legion did for me – changed my life,” Bounds says.

“What Dennis and Jim did for me – and what The American Legion did for me – changed my life.”

Richard Bounds, Marine Corps veteran

Hodny, too, draws praise from the veterans she’s helping in Walsh County, north of Kubischta’s territory.

Bud Ramsey tried to convince the Army that his hearing was severely damaged when he served with an artillery unit during the Korean War. He was so frustrated by failed attempts to get help that it took the Ramseys’ pastor and the mayor of Park River to persuade him to see Hodny about filing a claim. Ramsey was so surprised that Hodny succeeded in getting the claim approved “that we stopped back in her office to see if everything was legit,” says Ramsey’s wife, Ruth.

Deremo, the department service officer, attributes the success of these county-based veterans advocates to something more than knowing how to navigate the claims system. “Dennis is a fighter,” he says. “Katrina has a heart to serve veterans, (and) she’s not afraid to take on big cases.”

Service officers cover all 53 North Dakota counties, a corps established by the state legislature in 1945 and funded by a small property tax levy. Some service officers, including Kubischta, cover multiple sparsely populated counties. The Fort Berthold, Fort Totten and Standing Rock tribes also have their own service officers. The county service officers work with the Legion’s Deremo and other national service officers.

Local American Legion posts play an important role in Kubischta’s and Hodny’s outreach efforts.

Today, Kubischta laughs when he remembers the warning he received when he accepted the position long ago. “I love the heck out of this job,” he says. “The best part ... is when the claims are successful, and these guys get the help they deserve.”

– Ken Olsen



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the organization's members were already at work throughout the United States, helping veterans file claims and receive benefits from the Bureau of War Risk Insurance, a predecessor of the Veterans Benefits Administration. Every American Legion department and post was asked to appoint a war-risk officer to help veterans understand what they were eligible to receive and how to apply. Within the first year, Legion war-risk officers secured hundreds of thousands of dollars in compensation for World War I veterans, got five men released from jail and even located soldiers' luggage that had been lost by the military on the trip home from Europe.

The Legion's war-risk officers evolved into department service officers as the various government agencies dealing with veterans were consolidated into the Veterans Administration in 1930. As America marched off to war and home again in subsequent decades, the role of Legion service officers grew more complicated. They became experts in GI Bill education benefits after World War II. They helped veterans obtain VA home-loan eligibility certificates. They helped at job fairs. They assisted surviving spouses trying to determine what kind of death benefits they could receive. Health problems related to Agent Orange exposure, post-traumatic stress disorder and undiagnosed Gulf War illnesses shared by many who fought in Operation Desert Storm added new dimensions to the claims process, and to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

Tools of transition

The key to a speedy, accurate benefits claim is preparation. Veterans and families can make the most of their time with American Legion service officers by using online tools, like the new Claims Coach smartphone app and the Benefits Calculator at www.legion.org. The national website also offers a directory, searchable by ZIP code, of accredited American Legion service officers.



Veteran Services landing page

Veterans, their families and service officers can stay up to date on VA benefits, changes in laws, transition assistance programs and links to helpful resources.

www.legion.org/veteranservices

Outreach on the last frontier

The distance from Craig to Juneau is only about 200 miles. But this is Alaska. Veterans who make the trek to the VA outpatient clinic in the state capital commonly have to plan for five days of travel. The largest town on Prince of Wales Island in southeastern Alaska, Craig is home to about 100 veterans who use VA for health care.

The journey can be made by driving across the island to catch a ferry to Ketchikan on the mainland – or a float plane that makes two trips a day, weather permitting – where another plane can be taken to Juneau. That's the fast way. A more scenic route, using the Ketchikan-Juneau Ferry, takes a veteran along the Alaska Marine Highway System to his or her VA appointment.

Either way, the trip isn't easy, and the distance between veterans and their VA facilities creates more than a logistical barrier. Many don't realize the benefits they are eligible to receive. One Vietnam War veteran who served in the artillery, for instance, had no idea VA could help him get

hearing aids. Most veterans think the benefits application process, and the difficulty of getting to Juneau for services, is simply too much of a hassle.

That's where American Legion department service officer Jim Pisa enters the picture. Pisa served in the Navy from 1970 to 1974 and in the Coast Guard from 1976 to 1997. Now that he's retired from the service, he travels more than 40,000 miles a year on trips of two to four days, explaining VA benefits to veterans across the massive state and helping them get through the application process.

"If you took the state of Alaska and placed it on top of the lower 48, you would notice that the southeast panhandle cities of Ketchikan, Juneau, Prince of Wales, would be located in the southern states of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, and it would go as far north as Minnesota and the Canada border and east to west pretty much Atlantic to Pacific," Pisa says. "Basically I travel the (same area in distance as) the lower 48."

Claims Coach

The American Legion Claims Coach smartphone app is a new organizational tool to help veterans and their service officers get through the VA benefits claim-filing process. A nationwide directory of accredited American Legion service officers, a built-in organizer for appointments, documents

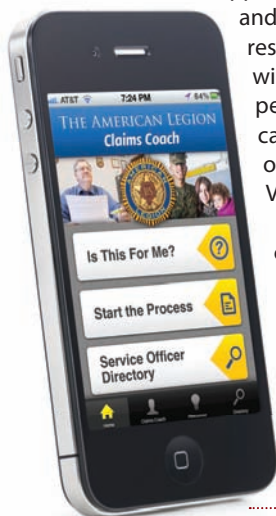
and a wealth of other resources are contained within the app. A

personal, secure file called "My Checklist" keeps everything in order, from your initial meeting through VA's decision.

The Claims Coach is available, free of charge, from the Apple iTunes store or Google Play. It can be used on a smartphone or electronic tablet.

For more information about the Claims Coach, along with a user guide and direct links to download it, visit the Legion's website.

 www.legion.org/mobileapps



Benefits Calculator

Are you eligible for VA dental care? GI Bill assistance? A VA home loan? The American Legion Benefits Calculator can help veterans determine which benefits the government makes available to them. By clicking through a few simple questions about your military service, you can narrow down what you and your family may be eligible to receive. The calculator includes access to a listing of American Legion department service offices throughout the country, searchable by state.

 www.legion.org/benefitscalculator

Service Officer Directory

Accredited American Legion service officers are available nationwide to assist veterans and their families, free of charge. One-on-one consultations with service officers are strongly encouraged for veterans to get the best possible results with their benefits claims applications. To find one near you, visit the new Service Officer Directory on the national American Legion website.

 www.legion.org/serviceofficers

"Local care for rural Alaska veterans does not mean care in Anchorage. It means care close to home when it is available."

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska

Veterans in Craig don't understand why the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has a clinic on the island, but VA care is as far away as Juneau. "There's a Bureau of Indian Affairs clinic 100 feet from my house," one veteran complained. "That's the federal government. Why the hell can't I just walk down there and save myself four days of planes and boats?"

VA and BIA recently signed a memorandum of understanding to explore how such a partnership would work in making 15 Alaska tribal health programs available to treat veterans.

"Coming from rural Alaska didn't keep thousands of Alaskans from serving their country, and Alaska's veterans community should not be kept from the medical care they need because of geography," Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, says. "From my first day in the U.S. Senate, ensuring that veterans are not disenfranchised from their earned VA benefits by reason of geography has been a core priority ... Local care for rural Alaska veterans does not mean care in Anchorage. It means care close to home when it is available."

Fifteen locations across a state as large as Alaska, however, won't take much pressure off the service officer. As long as Alaska keeps attracting veterans – at 17 percent, it has the highest per-capita veteran population in the country – Pisa will keep flying, island to mainland and back again, to tell them about the benefits they've earned and how to access them, no matter how hard it is to get to a VA doctor.

– Mark Seavey

Public rushes out for low cost appliance that slashes heat bills

Amish craftsmen vow to keep up with rush for brand-new Hybrid-Thermic 'Miracle Heater' Uses about the same energy as a coffee maker per hour, so just plug it in and never be cold again

NATIONWIDE – Everyone hates high heat bills. But we're all sick of turning the thermostat down and freezing our buns off.

That's why Sears hit a home-run with the first-ever low-cost appliance with Hybrid-Thermic™ heat technology, which no other heater can claim.

The brand-new portable Heat Surge HT-XL sips so little energy, you can run it for a full 12-hour day or night for just about a buck.

This modern marvel, hailed as the 'Miracle Heater,' caused such a frenzy at Sears stores with none in stock, one shopper refused to leave, forcing managers to hand over the floor model.

So now, immediate action is being taken to give more people more ways to get them, especially since some Sears stores will have limited stock this year.

Beginning at 8:30 a.m. today, readers are allowed to phone in to snag one. Heat Surge even posted a Double Coupon which has been reprinted on the next page for readers to use.

By using this coupon, everyone who calls is being rewarded with \$198 off. That makes this remarkable new home appliance a real steal at just \$398. The Double Coupon Deal in this advertising announcement also entitles you to free home delivery. So now everyone has a fair shot at getting one.

"The Heat Surge HT-XL is a revolutionary appliance that can easily roll from room to room. But we didn't want it to look like some metal box that just



■ **GOTTA HAVE ONE:** An eager crowd awaits the brand-new Heat Surge HT-XL as Jonas Miller stages a promotional delivery event. "I heard so much about the Amish Miracle Heater but couldn't find where to get one," said Mary Straughn. Readers can now call the National Appliance Center at 1-888-209-8569 to use the extraordinary Double Coupon that also gets you free delivery.

sits there. So we turned to our Amish craftsmen and now each one is made to look like a sleek, slim fireplace that has no real flames and is totally safe to the touch. All you do is just plug it in," said Director of Technology, Dave Martin.

A shy but now famous Amish craftsman known as Melvin said, "Folks know about our quality. No particle board, just real wood. Fully-assembled by our own hands and we're making these cabinets right here in the good ole USA."

And according to an avalanche of Heat Surge

consumer reviews the company has good reason to boast an overwhelming **CONSUMER 'BEST BUY.'**

"Folks are saving money everywhere by zone heating with the brand-new Heat Surge HT-XL," said Walt O'Neil, the analyst tracking the impact Heat Surge is having on consumer heat bills.

"But be aware of the fakes out there. Accept no imitations. If it does not have the Heat Surge name on it, it is not real Amish and it's not Hybrid-Thermic™. I repeat, if it does not say 'Heat Surge,' you are getting ripped

off," O'Neil said.

The Heat Surge HT-XL has earned the coveted UL certification and is protected by a limited full year replacement and 30-day Satisfaction Guarantee.

So for readers hoping to get the new Heat Surge for themselves and take care of Christmas gifts, there is good news.

You can use the Double Coupon more than once. But there is a catch. You can only get away with it by calling the National Appliance Center at 1-888-209-8569 before the coupon expires in just a few days. ■

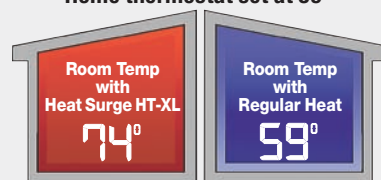
How It Works: You get 74° of bone-soothing room heat even when the home thermostat is turned down to 59° with the first-ever Heat Surge HT-XL



The revolutionary Heat Surge HT-XL is the first-ever appliance with Hybrid-Thermic™ technology, an engineering genius so advanced, it actually uses a micro-furnace from the Coast of China and a thermal heat exchanger to perform its miracles. Together, this Hybrid-Thermic heat takes care of all the cold spots. In fact, it actually produces bone-soothing heat to help you feel good.

This modern marvel saves you money based on a U.S. average that

Home thermostat set at 59°



■ **ZONE HEATING SLASHES HEAT BILLS:** Notice how the home thermostat is turned down to 59°. The left shows the Heat Surge Hybrid-Thermic 'Miracle Heater' blanketing the whole room with 74° of warmth.

says it uses only about 9¢ of energy an hour on the standard setting. But surprise, it's not just a metal box that belongs in a basement. The portable Heat Surge HT-XL comes installed in an Amish-built wood cabinet made in the heartland of Ohio, measuring just 25" high, 32" wide, and 12" deep. It has the ambiance of a real fireplace, but it has no real flames and it's safe to the touch. It's so safe it's where the kids will play and the dog and cat will sleep. When it arrives, just plug it in.

How to get the Double Coupon Deal: Use the Double Coupon reprinted here

JUST DAYS REMAIN: An extraordinary \$198.00 Double Coupon Deal has been authorized for today's readers. To use the \$198.00 coupon and get the Heat Surge HT-XL for just \$398 (plus applicable sales tax in OH & FL), you must call the National Appliance Center at **1-888-209-8569**. Because it's a Double Coupon, it entitles you to FREE Shipping and Handling, but only for those that beat the deadline.

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■ **SAFE:** The beautiful L.E.D. Fireless Flames on the new Heat Surge HT-XL are so stunning, everyone thinks it's real, but it's actually safe to the touch. It's so safe, it's where the kids will play & the pets will sleep.



■ **BLANKET FREE COMFORT:** "We just couldn't take another winter of always being cold. And as an early Christmas gift, we got one for the kids to help them with their heat bills," Julia White said.

Quality over quantity

American Legion service officer Randy Fisher says that while VA claims processors are adequately educated in procedures, data collection and software applications, they are often short on medical knowledge like bone structure, muscle systems, basic anatomy and physiology.

A retired VA nurse manager, Fisher speaks from experience when he says many Legion department service officers are better trained than agency adjudicators who make decisions every day about disability benefits. That problem, he told Congress last spring, contributes to the backlog of unresolved claims.

Testifying before the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Fisher told of one VA claims processor who didn't know that "extremities" meant "hands and feet," thus delaying a veteran's claim and benefits.

Fisher says medical opinions in Compensation & Pension exams do not always come from qualified specialists but from general practitioners, nurses or even social workers. "We think they ought to have a lot more training for the raters at the regional offices. I think they'd understand a whole lot better when someone is talking about tissue damage or muscle damage, so they can actually see the medical physiology side of it."

Processors "do have quotas, and I think that really puts a lot of pressure on them at the end of the month," he said. "A lot of times when they adjudicate claims, they don't dig into it enough to satisfy the claim the first time. And that causes a lot of appeals, and that delays the claims process."

Besides ramping up training, the Legion wants VA to re-examine the work-credit system it uses for claims processors, which awards bonuses based on the number of claims processed – not on their accuracy.



Kentucky service officer Randy Fisher, right, tells members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee that improved medical knowledge can reduce the backlog. *Craig Roberts photo*

"As service officers, we are sympathetic to the caseload," Fisher told lawmakers. "We have to look at every case file for every veteran we see, as well. The difference is, we know that if we miss something, we're letting a fellow veteran down. Yes, it might take a little bit longer to go over that claims file and make sure everything is in order and we got the claim done right. However, we also know if we got it done right, that claims file is not coming back to our desk."

In addition to national service officer schools, The American Legion Department of Kentucky provides regular training at posts in the state. "We train on understanding VA examinations because of the number of times we see exams come back improperly, with the wrong forms filled out or the wrong conditions examined," Fisher said. "We train on areas of the rating schedule where there appear to be inequities, such as mental health disorders, where ratings can be uneven and even seemingly random."

Fisher says VA could benefit by hiring more veterans to process claims. "The shared sacrifice of shared service is a strong bond. For many veterans, dealing with VA can be dealing with a faceless bureaucracy. Sitting down with a service officer to talk about your claim is sitting down with a real person who has seen the same military you served in. Trust goes a long way."

– Marty Callaghan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

service officer's job. Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are today returning to civilian life having survived combat at rates much higher than those of previous war eras but suffering from multiple service-connected conditions and, if history is any indication, the strong possibility of more to come. Every time Congress passes new laws to help veterans or VA makes administrative changes, it's the service officer's responsibility to understand and help veterans searching for answers.

"The Vietnam War has been over since 1975, and they are still adding new conditions linked to Agent Orange," Walsh says.

The playing field for service officers is constantly shifting. American Legion service officer schools, with sessions focusing on legal, medical and procedural issues – as well as informal sharing of best practices – keep those who work in this profession well-educated. What cannot be taught,

however, is the amount of heart it takes to help veterans in need.

"I love to help," says Cynthia Mann, an assistant service officer in Los Angeles. "My brother was a veteran, my dad is a Korean War vet, and I have family in the military now. I love the fact that I can be instrumental in providing service to veterans – especially to surviving spouses. VA is a huge agency, and I like being able to help a veteran cut through the red tape and find shortcuts to getting the benefits they've earned."

Adds Lannie Thomas of Michigan: "From an emotional standpoint, there's nothing greater, because all of us in the Legion, especially service officers, have that eternal flame in our hearts, and it never goes out. I've known people who have done it for 20 years, 25 years, 30 years – and if you talk to them today, they want to talk about VA benefits. It just never goes out." 🌿

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All hands on deck

The Veterans Benefits Administration is facing a perfect storm. Vietnam veterans are aging. Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are separating from the military, including an unprecedented number of National Guardsmen and reservists. Retired Brig. Gen. Allison A. Hickey took on perhaps the most daunting challenge in the Department of Veterans Affairs when she became undersecretary for benefits in June 2011. *The American Legion Magazine* recently talked with Hickey about her mission and the difficulty of providing VA benefits as the backlog of unresolved claims continues to grow.



What sort of demand for benefits does the VBA anticipate now that the troops are coming home?

Significantly increasing. Over the next three to five years, there will be about a million folks joining our rolls.

How is VA dealing with the surge of demand for benefits, from the GI Bill to disability claims?

From a GI Bill perspective, we're in really great shape. We have gone from an average of 60 days to do an original education claim down to – depending on the particular season – 24 to 30 days for servicemembers, veterans and beneficiaries. The VA home loan program has, right now, the single lowest foreclosure rate among all primes, subprimes and all others, and the lowest seriously delinquent foreclosure rate as well.

We have done more than 1 million (benefits) claims for two years in a row. Now, that isn't a big deal and doesn't sound good if you weren't one of the ones that got done – and we totally understand that and don't feel great about it. But what is important to note is that in the past 18 months, we have taken 37 percent of our highest tenured, most qualified, most capable workforce and directed them toward the Vietnam veteran and Agent Orange claims that came as a result of the three new presumptive conditions. Because of the complexity of those claims and 50 years of law, that took twice the normal workforce per claim. We adjudicated 260,000 claims in 18 months – absolutely, unequivocally, the absolute right thing to do by our Vietnam veterans, but there was an impact on the rest of our claims.

How soon are today's young veterans filing for benefits?

The number of veterans who typically file in the first year has been about 20 percent ... I think we're going to see the number who file in the first year go up. I am seeing an increase in individual unemployability claims. Vietnam-era veterans – if they hit 65 or so – we're seeing an increase in their supplemental claims. We are seeing more claims from women. I'm seeing more military sexual trauma claims, and we have designed a brand-new process since I've been on board that specifically targets those claims – doing them right, with the right sensitivity and the right training.

What kind of benefits outreach is VA doing?

We did 6,300 outreach events across the nation – as well as overseas – in fiscal 2011. That's hitting all of the Yellow

Ribbon events, the demobilization sites, the National Guard drill weekends and family events with the Guard and reserve. Our online Transition Assistance Program – that's another way we're getting the word out. We are doing a lot with our claims folks at the new hiring events.

How are post-9/11 VA claims different than in the past?

The complexity and intensity of the claims. I call it the contention effect. World War II veterans came to us with one or two contentions: my back or my head hurts. Then our Vietnam veterans might have come home with three to four contentions per claim: my knee, my back, my PTSD. Today's post-Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are coming to us with 11 to 14 contentions per claim. That's not even our most wounded, ill and injured veterans. Those can be as high as 20 contentions per claim. Why? The good news is these men and women are coming back 10 times more likely to have survived. But they are coming back with many more contentions.

How can VA slow the backlog of unresolved claims as application numbers grow and become more complex?

It's all hands on deck – and that includes your men and women on the ground out there in The American Legion, and the state and county service officers. We need all of you to do whatever you can to help us get a fully developed claim from the start. This is crucial. It takes about 100 days to complete a fully developed claim. It takes 230 days, on average, to complete a claim that is not fully developed.

Where does the service officer fit into the equation?

(Legion service officers) are a critical capability for us. I just can't build a VBA big enough to do all the lifting you all help us do every single day. It's very, very important that all of our service officers across the nation who we partner with are really taking advantage of the training that I know the Legion mandates they do. A lot of our population has less than two years on the job. We learn a lot from you.

Is there a need for more trained service officers?

I think there is always a need for more. I would encourage you to bring more women on those rolls. I hear repeatedly from women servicemembers and veterans that they want to talk to a woman.

– Ken Olsen



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It wasn't more than ten years ago that we met with former U.S. Mint Director Donna Pope. She spoke with pride about what she considered to be her greatest achievement as Director under President Reagan: Creation of the American Eagle silver and gold bullion coin programs, the first of their kind in our nation's history.

The purpose of these coins was to give people the opportunity to own physical silver and gold in a form certified for weight and purity by the U.S. Mint. While the bullion coin program was a signal success, nobody took into account the profound effect it would have on the collector market.

Silver Eagles = Today's Morgan Dollars

In the 1800s and early 1900s, the U.S. Morgan Silver Dollar was struck year upon year at various mints and circulated at face value. Their core value was in their precious metal content. However, in top grades, Morgan Silver Dollars can sell today for tens and even hundreds of thousands of dollars each!

For the same reason, many collectors today see the Silver Eagle series as a literal "ground floor" opportunity to acquire the top-grade coins as they are released. They started submitting Silver Eagles to the leading independent coin grading services, such as Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC), praying that the coins would come back with the highest possible grade: MS70 (all Uncirculated coins are graded on a point system from a low of 60 to a high of 70, with 70 representing flawless perfection). Of all the Silver Eagles produced by the U.S. Mint in 2011, less than one out of every 788 earned the NGC MS70 grade!

MS70 = \$\$\$\$\$!

In the rarified atmosphere of MS70, Silver Eagles have soared to market prices that I can only characterize as surreal. Consider this: MS70 Silver Eagles have been selling for truly stratospheric prices. Here are just a few eye-popping examples:

1996 MS70 Silver Eagle	\$5,190 (NGC population:128)
1988 MS70 Silver Eagle	\$2,560 (NGC population:193)
1991 MS70 Silver Eagle	\$4,060 (NGC population:118)
1994 MS70 Silver Eagle	\$1,660 (NGC population:175)

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Seconds to Win

**For 58 years,
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Legion has
helped develop
America's top
rodeo talent.**

BY KEN OLSEN

*Keaton Mundy
of Evansville,
Wyo., is bucked
from a bull
during the
Wyoming High
School Rodeo
finals in
Douglas.*

Eldon Lindsay photo

Emily Faber steps off her galloping horse, flies to the goat, flanks it, ties its feet and steps back. Her time is 8.31 seconds – one of the best on this 98-degree summer evening at the 2012 Wyoming High School Rodeo finals.

“It’s amazing – like no other feeling,” says Faber, who loves more than any other event the complex acrobatics of racing across the arena, dismounting, pinning and tying a goat. “You have to be pretty strong. You have to be pretty athletic.”

And pretty determined.

“You can’t luck into goat tying,” says K.L. Spratt, a fellow high school rodeo contestant. “You can’t buy your way into it with an expensive horse. You can’t throw a lucky loop. You have to put some time into it.”

For nearly 60 years, Wyoming high school students such as Faber and Spratt have competed to become the nation’s best goat tyers, barrel racers, calf ropers and bull riders, with help from The American Legion. The outgrowth of a competition started by World War II veterans in southwestern Wyoming in the late 1940s stands today as the only state rodeo program backed by the Legion. The Wyoming contest produces some of the best rodeo talent in the country and thousands of dollars in college scholarships, as well as camaraderie, independence and confidence that will define young men and women throughout their lives.

“There’s a lot stacked against you,” says Eric Oliver, a two-time Wyoming high school bull-riding champion who went on to compete in college and at the professional level. “A guy learns how to deal with adversity. It’s a really good foundation. You won’t find many kids around rodeo who aren’t pretty solid.”

The contestants warming up their horses and roping arms at the Wyoming State Fairgrounds in Douglas on this June day hail from places like Lingle and Lance Creek, Cora and Kinnear, Rozet and Jay Em – spots on the map lucky to still have a post office. Their parents started them in rodeo as soon as they could walk.

“They sat me on horses pretty much from the time I could sit up,” says Spratt, who grew up on a ranch near Lysite. She was competing in junior rodeo at 7 and has qualified for the National High School Finals Rodeo three times. Spratt will take her four best rodeo horses to college in New Mexico this fall.

Relentless practice is a necessity. “I’m goat tying, roping, and riding my barrel (racing) horse every day I’m not at a rodeo,” says Faber, who has qualified for the national finals three

times. “My dad makes every run feel like a national finals run. It’s not always fun. But if you can overcome the adversity, then it becomes fun.”

Shai Schaefer understands that theory while practicing goat tying in the 102-degree heat a few hours before the final evening performance. Why push that hard? “Anxiety and nerves,” says Schaefer, who won a national goat-tying championship in Colorado in 2009.

The physical challenges of rodeo are daunting, no matter the weather. Take steer wrestling. Austin Eller, who weighs 155 pounds, leaps from his horse onto a galloping 700-pound beast that he has to take down with nothing more than his arms and whatever brawn his lean frame can leverage. Half the battle is successfully executing the diving catch onto the running steer. Many contestants land face-down in the dirt. And connecting with the steer is a mixed blessing.

“Steer wrestling has been described like jumping out of a pickup going 40 mph and landing on a mailbox,” Eller says. “Only a steer is a lot bigger than a mailbox. It’s like tackling someone on the football field. You go all out and think about the pain later.”

Rodeo takes considerable mental discipline, too. Eller envisions every step of steer wrestling and calf roping repeatedly until it becomes automatic. The goal, Faber adds, is to practice so much that muscle memory takes over when chatter from the announcer, music and the roar of the crowd threaten distraction.

The difference between winning and losing is often a matter of tenths or hundredths of a second. And it’s all on the individual.

“These kids know there isn’t anybody who can cover for them,” says Casper College rodeo coach Tom Parker, who won the state saddle bronc riding competition in this same arena in the late 1960s. “You get one shot at it. You don’t have the opportunity to go behind the chute and regroup and go out and do it again.”

Rodeo is not a school-sanctioned sport. There’s no equipment provided, no team bus, no getting out of school early on a Friday to travel to competitions on the other side of the state. The program depends entirely on participants, their families and volunteers. It’s a substantial commitment. For example, Schaefer’s family drives 50,000 miles a year to rodeo events, often with four goats, three horses and two dogs in tow.

The payoff? “It’s a big accomplishment,” says Eller, who won the state steer-wrestling championship this year. “It’s the satisfaction of, ‘I came from

Wyoming's rodeo family 'tough enough' to give back

Wyoming High School Rodeo contestants know what it's like to go it alone. They rely on themselves and their families to buy saddles, feed their horses, pay their veterinarian bills and travel to nearly 30 competitions each year. They don't receive any school support or taxpayer funds.

So it's even more impressive that on the last night of the 58th Wyoming High School Rodeo finals, sponsored by The American Legion, these participants donated \$4,400 to help the sister of a contestant battling non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

It's part of a fundraiser called "Tough Enough to Wear Pink" that started on the professional rodeo circuit in 2004. In Wyoming, bull riders and barrel racers don pink shirts, pink hats and other pink clothing for the final evening performance. Local rodeo clubs challenge each other to make the largest contribution.

People in the audience are also encouraged to give.

The money goes to someone in the Wyoming High School Rodeo Association family whenever possible, says Jo Ann Merritt, who chairs the state rodeo board. Merritt underwent chemotherapy for breast cancer last year and was "bald as a bird at state finals," she says. "The wonderful people of Wyoming raised around \$4,000 and made me the recipient."

Merritt – who competed in Wyoming High School Rodeo in the early 1980s – chose to donate the money to Relay for Life. Wrangler Jeans matched her contribution, and the money went to help a young girl whose uncle had participated in high school rodeo.

In 2010, the money raised by the Wyoming High School Rodeo community went to one contestant's mother, who was suffering from brain cancer.

a little old town, and I'm doing something big in the world."

There's also the knowledge that individual effort makes all the difference. "It's all on you and your horse," Faber says. "How hard you work determines how well you are going to do."

Rodeo attracts exceptional students. As the contestants are introduced by the finals announcer, their academic honors are noted. Participants submit transcripts every semester to show that they meet the minimum 2.5 grade point average. Many have straight-A report cards and excel in other sports. Staying out of trouble is mandatory.

"There's no alcohol, no tobacco and no drugs," says Jim Whipps, a Vietnam War veteran who has

served as The American Legion Department of Wyoming's representative on the rodeo board since 2005. "If you get thrown in jail, don't come back. Out of hundreds of kids in the past seven years I don't think we've ever had a problem with more than one or two. Rodeo kids have to be smarter than the average bear."

Ninety percent of Wyoming High School Rodeo participants go on to college, Parker estimates. He emphasizes education when he signs up students for his team. "The first thing I tell students is, don't come to Casper College just to rodeo," Parker says. "You've got to get an education."

Rodeo helps pay the way, and many Wyoming High School Rodeo participants receive help from the Legion.

"We give \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year in scholarships," says Whipps, who chairs the high school rodeo scholarship committee and is credited with significantly increasing the Legion's contributions. "Half of the 2012 scholarships were funded by The American Legion Department of Wyoming. That's not good enough. I want the day to come that every kid who applies receives some money from the Legion so they can go home and tell their



Jim Whipps, a Vietnam War veteran and member of Marion Tanner Post 29 in Basin, Wyo., has raised thousands in Legion contributions for the Wyoming High School Rodeo Association. Eldon Lindsay photo



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brother, who just came back from Iraq, to go join the Legion.”

Whipps is working to make that a reality. He solicits scholarship donations from Legion posts and donates a registered quarter horse to the Wyoming High School Rodeo contestant who sells the most fundraising calendars each year.

Faber, whose grandfather was a Korean War veteran and member of Post 70 in Judith Gap, Mont., is grateful for the help. “It was my goal to have college paid for with rodeo,” says Faber, who plans to study sports medicine and become a physician for rodeo athletes. “The Legion does so much for this rodeo association and for this state. And it does a lot for the youth of America.”

Jo Ann Merritt, who competed in Wyoming High School Rodeo from 1981 to 1985 and now serves as chairman of the state high school rodeo board, agrees. “I believe our high school rodeo is stronger than other states, and I believe The American Legion plays a huge role in that.”

Rodeo is a natural fit for Wyoming veterans. “This is the strongest youth organization the Legion can be involved with,” Parker says. “They step up and do whatever they’re asked. Every member of The American Legion in Wyoming has the same goal in mind – to help kids, support them and encourage them to become leaders.”

The Wyoming Legion does far more than fund scholarships. Legion members serve on the state rodeo board and show up to state finals to help sort livestock, maintain animal pens and, in Parker’s case, judge bareback, saddle bronc and bull riding.

Whipps and Past Department Commander Stephan Rennells are even in front of the stands, selling raffle tickets to raise money for the state and national high school rodeos on the final sweltering night of competition – after an exhausting week of helping other volunteers perform the hundreds of tasks that make rodeo competition possible.

Then there’s the small kindness that makes a significant impression. Post 5 in Torrington surprised Schaefer and 14 other contestants from southeastern Wyoming with funds to help them attend this year’s state finals. It wasn’t big money – enough for ice cream and dinner, Schaefer explains – but she and her fellow contestants were touched.

“We don’t have a club, and nobody in the community supports us,” she says. “It was really nice someone took the time to think of us.” 🌿

Ken Olsen is a frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.

Paige Stovall of Lingle, Wyo., works her way through the arena during the third section of barrel racing during the Wyoming High School Rodeo finals.

Eldon Lindsay photo



Watch video from the Wyoming High School Rodeo competition online:

 www.legion.org/magazine



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WHEN HOPE SEEMS LOST

Veterans' families, friends should stay alert to warning signs of suicide.

BY ANDY ROMEY

An exact number for veteran suicides is difficult to pinpoint, but current estimates are alarming the military and veterans communities alike. New data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – the federal agency that tracks suicide rates – show that veterans could account for about 20 percent of suicide deaths annually. Put another way, that's 18 or so veterans who take their lives each day.

There is great concern about these numbers, especially considering that 1 million men and women are expected to leave the U.S. military in the next five years.

Right now, only about one third of veterans use VA facilities, and they're free to opt out of the military health system after they separate from service. This makes it difficult to get reliable statistics on veterans' medical conditions, especially mental health. Lawmakers and officials from VA and CDC are working together to develop more concrete numbers on veteran suicides, and their findings are expected to be released later this year.

The troubling statistics caught the attention of Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, who testified before the House Armed Services Committee and the Committee on Veterans Affairs in July.

The suicide rate among servicemembers "is an epidemic," Panetta said. "Something is wrong."

He added that the military needs to "promote a culture in which people will get the help they need, emphasize mental fitness. We must improve the ability of military leadership to be preventive."

Help is available for those who are at risk for suicide. Friends, family members and others in a veteran's support circle should be alert and willing to act if that person shows warning signs. Help is available even for those who don't live near VA facilities. VA's National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, **(800) 273-8255 (TALK)**, can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week. VA has additional resources available online, including a confidential chatroom moderated by health-care professionals (**www.veteranscrisisline.net**), and a forum for personal stories and resources (**maketheconnection.net**). Any veteran who feels suicidal, or even a little blue, is encouraged to call the hotline, log on to chat, or visit any VA facility to immediately see a mental health professional. There's never a reason not to ask for help.

September is VA's National Suicide Prevention Month. Dr. Janet Kemp, VA's national suicide prevention coordinator, talked with *The American Legion Magazine* about VA's progress in tracking veteran suicide, warning signs, and what to do when a veteran is at risk.

What are some of the warning signs that a veteran is suicidal or severely depressed?

The first indication that there is a problem is that the person stops planning for the future, or starts saying that it doesn't really matter when his next appointment is or that it really doesn't matter if something happens to him. There's a sense of hopelessness and not caring about the future. That's sometimes hard to recognize, and it doesn't necessarily always mean that someone is going to kill himself, but it means that he has a disregard for his life or the future. And that's worrisome.

Other things to watch for are things such as giving away belongings, making sure finances and wills are in order, or talking about death and what it would be like to not be alive. Other different behaviors that they haven't had before can be indications, such as excessive drinking or substance use.

What should people do if they notice some or all of these signs in a loved one or friend?

They need to know that it's OK to ask the veteran outright if he or she is all right and express concern ... Addressing it directly with the veteran is always appropriate, and people shouldn't hesitate to bring up something.

Getting the veteran help for any reason is a good idea, even if the veteran is just depressed or feeling hopeless. Telling the veteran that you'll go with him or her to get help or that you'll find someone to help him or her is an important step. If neither of those work, certainly someone can call the crisis line for the veteran, and we'll reach out to the veteran to make some assessments and give some help.

What support services are available to veterans through VA? What happens when a veteran walks into a VA facility and says he's suicidal and needs help?

There's a suicide prevention coordinator at every VA across the country who would immediately see the veteran. If he or she isn't available, other mental health staff are available whose job is to see veterans on an urgent basis. Certainly, veterans should feel free to walk in and tell people that they are suicidal or in trouble. Veterans who don't live near a VA can call the hotline or log into the chatroom.



Dr. Janet Kemp, VA's national suicide prevention coordinator, says Vietnam War veterans are a concern regarding suicide.

Craig Roberts photo

Are suicide rates increasing among veterans as they are among active-duty troops?

Up to this point, with the data we have, it doesn't look like there is a spike in veteran suicides. Certainly, veterans die by suicide at a somewhat higher rate than the regular population, but it doesn't look like that's changed much over time. In fact, since the beginning of the war, the veteran suicide rate has dropped a little bit ... Right now, we're holding steady overall.

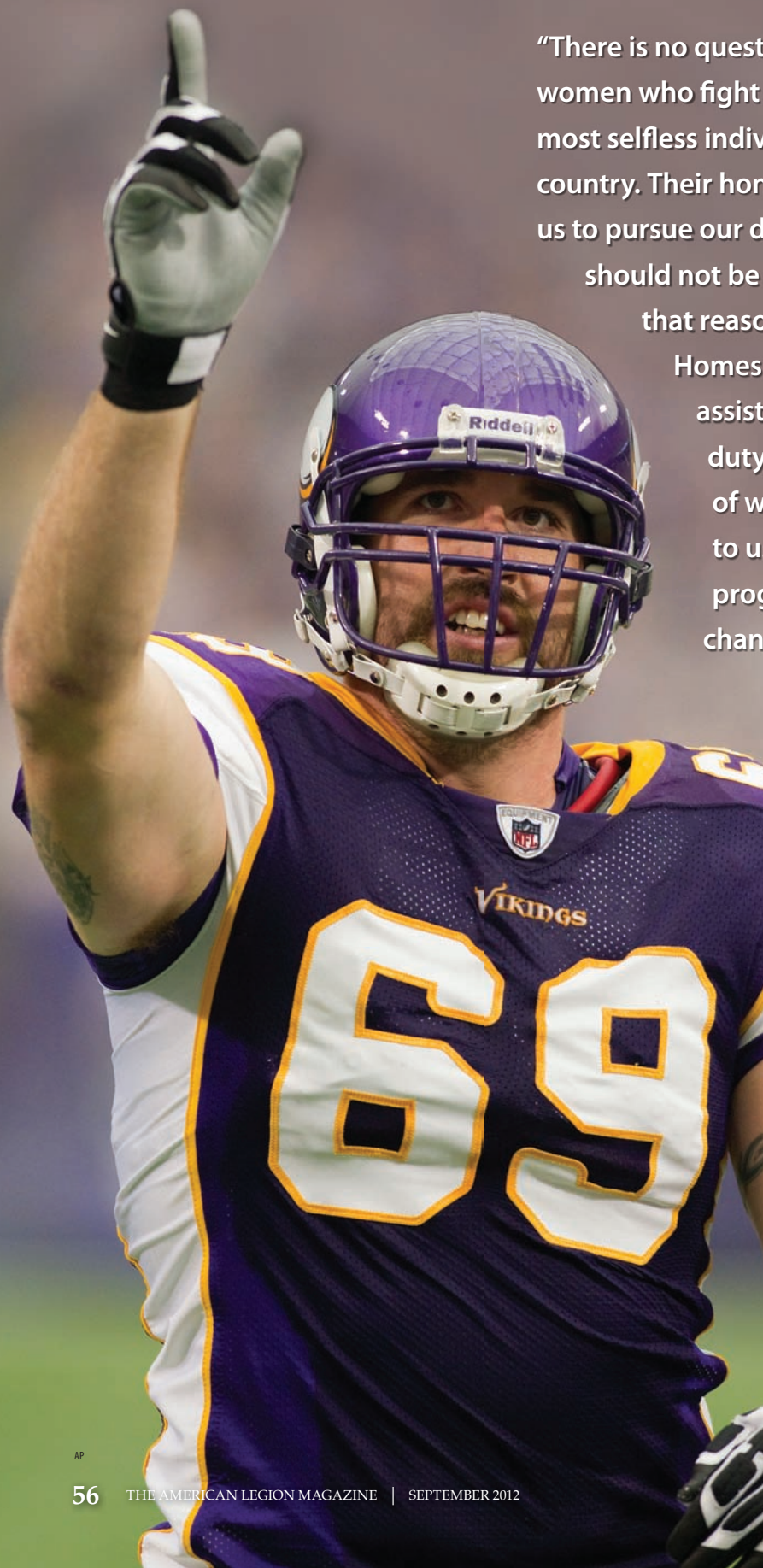
Veteran suicide is perceived to be a problem among young veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Are veterans of past eras equally at risk?

The group we're very concerned about is our Vietnam veterans. The suicide rate for them is higher compared to their civilian counterparts. While we are not seeing a rise in those numbers, it is actually still the largest group in the veterans population that kill themselves. Vietnam veterans are hit on a daily basis with information about the current war. A lot of them have issues with stress disorders that perhaps they haven't dealt with and that are perhaps coming to the surface now, and a lot of them are experiencing normal middle-age things which are distressing. They may be retiring, losing spouses or friends, or are being diagnosed with more chronic medical conditions and not feeling well. You put all of that together, and it can be a dangerous time.

What can The American Legion family do to assist in the fight against veteran suicides?

Reaching out to fellow veterans – not just new veterans, although they are incredibly important and are having all sorts of trouble, but veterans of all eras. One of the most critical things is reaching out, being a friend, letting them know that someone who knows what they're going through is there for them. If someone is having trouble, helping them get help is certainly a lifesaving activity. 🌿

Andy Romey is assistant Web editor for The American Legion.

A full-page photograph of Jared Allen, a defensive end for the Minnesota Vikings. He is wearing a purple and gold Vikings jersey with the number 69, a purple Riddell helmet, and white gloves. He is pointing his right index finger upwards. The background is a blurred green field.

"There is no question that the men and women who fight for our freedom are the most selfless individuals in this amazing country. Their honorable acts allow each of us to pursue our dreams, and that sacrifice should not be taken for granted. It is for that reason that we founded Homes for Wounded Warriors to assist veterans returning from duty. While it's just a fraction of what these individuals give to us, it is the most rewarding program in which I have had a chance to participate."

Jared Allen

NFL Pro Bowl defensive end

Jared Allen played football for Idaho State University before the Kansas City Chiefs took him in the fourth round of the 2004 NFL draft. The Chiefs later traded Allen to the Minnesota Vikings, where he set the single-season franchise record for most sacks by a Viking, with 22 last season. Following a USO trip to the Middle East, he created Jared Allen's Homes for Wounded Warriors to build accessible homes for severely wounded veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

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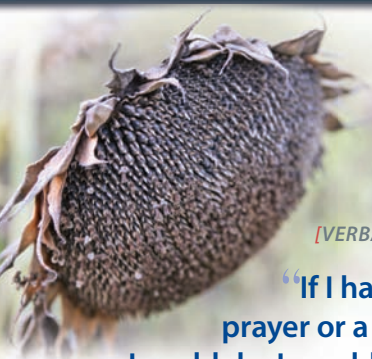
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[VERBATIM]

“If I had a rain prayer or a rain dance I could do, I would do it.”

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, telling President Barack Obama at the White House that this year’s historic Midwest drought will shrink harvests and result in higher food prices

“No price the NCAA can levy will repair the grievous damage inflicted by Jerry Sandusky on his victims.”

NCAA President Mark Emmett, announcing sanctions for Penn State’s mishandling of the child sex-abuse scandal. The school faces a \$60 million penalty, a four-year football postseason ban and the vacating of all wins dating to 1998.

“I don’t understand why police officers across this country don’t stand up collectively and say, ‘We’re not going to protect you unless you, the public, through your legislature, do what’s required to keep us safe.’”

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, urging police officers to go on strike for expanded gun control following a mass shooting at an Aurora, Colo., theater that left 12 dead and 58 injured

“In the present civil war it is quite possible that God’s purpose is something different from the purpose of either party.”

President Abraham Lincoln, “Meditation on the Divine Will,” written in early September 1862, after the Union Army’s defeat at Second Manassas

Sources: Reuters, ESPN, CNN

A MATTER OF PRIORITIES

Retired general, current defense industry executive considers the economic ripple effect and national security threat of major DoD budget cuts and the end of U.S. tank production.

An Operation Desert Storm tank battalion commander, Ed Dyer knows armored combat vehicles and what they mean to the effective prosecution of war. The retired U.S. Army brigadier general also knows what those

vehicles mean to the workers who build them, from the major manufacturers to the small suppliers. The significance of both perspectives, he fears, has been missed in Washington.

The Department of Defense stands squarely in the budget-reduction crosshairs in the final months of 2012. A drawdown of nearly \$500 billion in DoD funding, a function of sequestration, is set to begin in January – the consequence of failure by the bipartisan congressional “supercommittee”

that could not agree on a federal deficit-reduction solution last winter. Unlike ships and aircraft, which have some immunity from the cuts because they are designated as strategic necessities, combat vehicles such as tanks, armored personnel carriers and Humvees are not exempt.

That means that the 920-employee Lima Army Tank Plant in Lima, Ohio, is in jeopardy. Layoffs have already begun, and a temporary shutdown is a serious threat for the plant, which is operated by General Dynamics. Should it close, continuous U.S. production of armored combat vehicles would cease for the first time since World War II.

The vice president of military programs for Indianapolis-based Allison Transmission, Inc., a global manufacturer that supplies the Lima plant, Dyer spent 29 years in the Army – most of that time as an officer of armored elements. An executive for Lockheed Martin following his military retirement in 2001, Dyer joined Allison, which does about 14 percent of its business in the defense industry, in 2010.

One of the featured speakers at The American Legion’s 1st National Security Symposium at the 2012 national convention in Indianapolis, he recently spoke with *The American Legion Magazine*.

How has defense contracting been a part of Allison Transmission, Inc., through the years?

It dates back to World War I, when we built, or actually upgraded, what were then Liberty engines for aircraft. Through World War II, we built Allison engines, which were famous throughout the Army Air Corps. Then we began building transmissions for military vehicles shortly after World War II. We’ve been building transmissions for military



vehicles ever since. We've been in every tank in the Army since the M46. Currently, we build the transmission for the Abrams tank. We build the transmission for the whole M113 family of armored vehicles. And we are in almost every medium and heavy truck in the Army and Marine Corps' inventories, and almost all the MRAPs (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles).

What do the imminent federal budget cuts mean to your particular segment of the defense industry?

We are in the combat-vehicle and tactical-wheeled vehicle industry. Obviously, with the drawdown in the two conflicts we've been in over the past decade, there is a decline in our defense work. That's to be expected. It has happened after every conflict. The concern today is the overall impact that budget cuts will have on the combat-vehicle industry.

Recently, in the (Department of Defense Strategic Guidance), there were a couple of industries that were spelled out as strategic industries for the country. One of those is combat aircraft. Another one is the shipbuilding industry. What is not recognized is that the combat-vehicle industry is as strategic an industry as those are, and it's not called out. Sometimes leadership loses sight of the impact of budget cuts on that segment of the industry.

If a military need arose suddenly, and tank manufacturing is out of the mix, couldn't it just start up again?

Can you restart an industry like this again? Certainly. We've done it before. But you're talking a large amount of time and a great deal of money.

Is it a foregone conclusion that America will soon be out of the tank-building business, and if so, who's harmed?

There has been discussion of (the Lima Army Tank Plant) shutting down. There is discussion of whether or not foreign military sales can fill in the gap. That doesn't address the sub-tier suppliers that are part of that industry. Some of those suppliers are going to go out of business ... Any of those communities, especially those that have a higher percentage of their business focused on the defense industry, obviously there will be a ripple effect.

What kind of effect would the suspension of tank production, even if temporary, have on businesses that supply Allison?

The two major products that we produce in Plant 14 are the Abrams transmission, what we call the X-1100 and the X-200, which is the transmission that's in the M113 family of armored vehicles. For that business, we have more than 100 suppliers that are mostly dedicated to that business. Some provide parts for both of those transmissions, and commercial transmissions. Some supply exclusively for those two (combat-vehicle) products. If the combat-vehicle industry was to shut down for some period of time, a certain percentage of those suppliers would be in financial risk. Potentially, 30 to 40 percent

Read an extended version of the interview with Ed Dyer, and watch video online:



www.legion.org/magazine

would exit the business and fill that void with other commercial business ... and then probably not be willing to come back to the defense business once it gets started again. That's the issue.

And institutional knowledge is lost.

We have not built a new combat vehicle for a couple of generations now. The Bradley fighting vehicle, the Abrams tank, are 1970s- and 1980s-era technology. The folks who have the expertise in building those are my age. They are not going to be in the workforce much longer. You can't go to school at Purdue or Rose-Hulman and learn how to be the designer for an Abrams tank, or a Bradley fighting vehicle, or the transmission for an Abrams tank. That's something that has to be passed down from generation to generation.

Can the budget deficit crisis be addressed without sacrificing national security?

I think it has to be done. We just have to figure out the best and smartest way. The budget crisis this nation faces is one of the, if not *the*, major national security issues we have today. So the Defense Department has to be part of the solution. But it has to be well thought out. We have to determine exactly what our priorities are, and how we fund those priorities. (Defense Secretary Leon Panetta) has said that the Defense Department would be gutted given the current plans for sequestration. And he is adamant that some alternate solution needs to be found.

What happens if nothing is resolved before January?

My focus is on combat vehicles. The issue facing that is the current plan by the Army to shut down the tank industrial base for some period – two to four years. The Lima tank plant is part of that, and all the suppliers that support the tank industrial base; that's going to have a major impact. That's an issue that I think has to be seriously examined.

– Jeff Stoffer



[HONOR]

'One last goodbye'

Seventy years after the day of infamy, the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association (PHSA) announced that it would officially disband. Though its numbers are dwindling, nearly 120 survivors traveled to Pearl Harbor for a ceremony last Dec. 7, including six from PHSA Chapter 138 in Pensacola, Fla., who wanted to say "one last goodbye."

The six men – Navy veterans George Mills, Jay Carraway, Cass Phillips, Frank Emond and Jim Landis, and Marine Corps veteran Bill Braddock – were treated to an unofficial Pearl Harbor Honor Flight, organized by Holly Shelton and retired Air Force Lt. Col. Bill Phillips. They were accompanied by caregivers, medical personnel, a documentary crew, and photographers Billie and Robert Nicholson. The group visited the USS *Arizona* Memorial, Hickam Air Force Base, the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific and other sites.

Called the Pearl Harbor Initiative, Shelton's and Phillips' project raised more than \$25,000 in donations. American Airlines' Air Compassion for Veterans charity provided 18 plane tickets. Mediacom and the Santa Rosa County School District made large contributions, too. Patriotism was the biggest single reason for giving as cited by donors, many of whom were veterans themselves.

The Nicholsons created and maintain the Pearl Harbor Honor Flight website, and they recorded the fundraising



Doug Malin photo

drive and journey in photos and video. The couple also talked with the Chapter 138 members about their memories of the Pearl Harbor attack in segments posted online.

The group flew from Pensacola to Dallas, and from there to Honolulu. At each airport, the public showed up to express their thanks and support for the Pearl Harbor survivors, led by high school ROTC units, Boy Scout troops, Patriot Riders and other organizations. Everywhere they went, from dining halls to airport gates to memorial ceremonies, the men received hugs and handshakes.

The Nicholsons remain in contact with the Pensacola six; "we catch up with them almost every week," Billie says. The Nicholsons are busy compiling their photographs of the Pearl Harbor Honor Flight for a coffee-table book they'd like to place in the nation's schools and libraries; it will complement the documentary filmed by Liz Watkins and her documentary crew.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Roberts says.

To follow the journey of the Pearl Harbor Honor Flight:

 www.pearlharborhonorflight.com

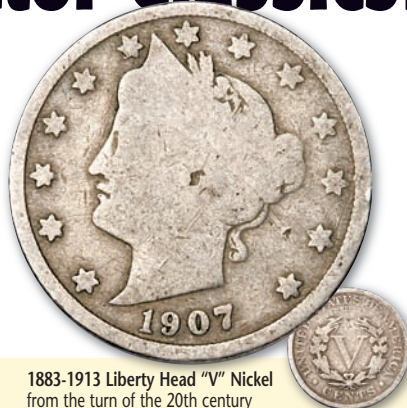
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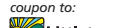
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[EMPLOYMENT]

Going, going, gone

InvestingAnswers.com has compiled a list of middle-class jobs that, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, are on their way to extinction in the next decade.

Machinists Competition from foreign metal-part manufacturers and improvements in automated machine tools, autoloaders and high-speed machining have increased productivity and decreased demand for machinists. *5 percent decline by 2018*

First-line supervisors, production managers and operating workers "The increase in automation, gains in productivity and competition from overseas has decreased the need for assembly workers ... And without assembly workers, there is no one to supervise." *5 percent decline by 2018*

Farmers and ranchers "Advancements in fertilizer and technology have improved productivity in farming, increasing food yields by 158 percent since 1948 and dramatically reducing the need for farmhands." *8 percent decline by 2018*

Paper-goods machine setters and operators "Advances in technology have allowed society to regularly consume media and communicate over long distances via computer and television screens instead of paper." *22 percent decline by 2018*

Desktop publishers "Learning basic desktop-publishing skills and using software like Microsoft PowerPoint is now a regular job function for most office workers." *23 percent decline by 2018*

Wellhead pumpers Increased use of automated storage and retrieval systems has decreased the need for wellhead pumpers, along with the United States' importing more than 62 percent of its crude oil from overseas. *28 percent decline by 2018*

Postal service mail sorters, processors and processing machine operators "New automated equipment that quickly and efficiently sorts and processes mail will greatly reduce the need for these workers in the coming years." Also, companies are taking advantage of postage rate discounts by presorting mail before it arrives at the post office. *30 percent decline by 2018*

Semiconductor processors "Today's processing chips ... have semiconductors that are nanometers in size, which is perfect for finely tuned machines to assemble but far too small for any human to interact with during production. In addition, dust and

other particles that we carry on our skin can interfere with and ruin the micro-sized components during production. These factors make machines better suited for this line of work." *32 percent decline by 2018*

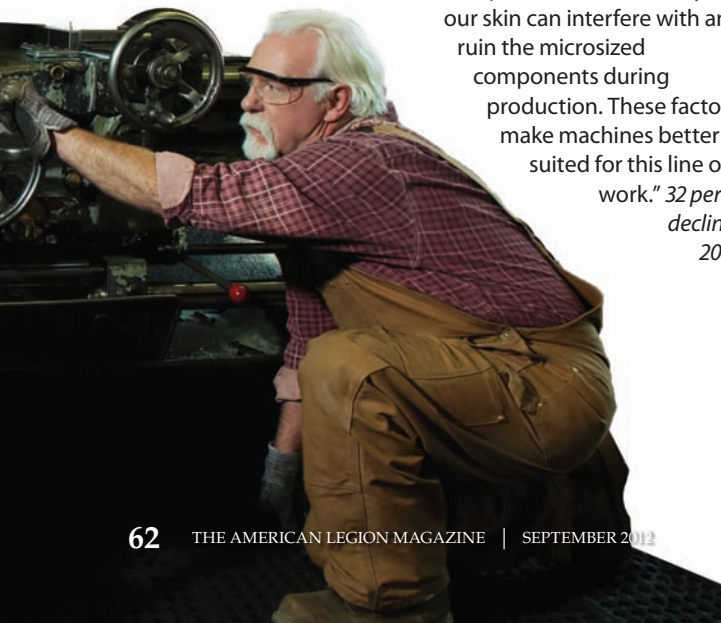


Photo courtesy of the DoD

[MILITARY AFFAIRS]

New Air Force One?

The Pentagon is planning for the next-generation Air Force One, *Defense News* reports. The twin 747s currently used as Air Force One – designated as VC-25s by the military – have been flying since 1990 and 1991. The Air Force wants to replace them by the end of the decade. The new plane could be an updated version of the 747 currently flown. Boeing "has expressed interest in pitching its new, larger 747-8 as an Air Force One replacement," according to *Defense News*.

[LEGISLATION]

Webb wants Congress' OK for humanitarian interventions

Sens. Jim Webb, D-Va., and Mike Lee, R-Utah, have introduced a bill "to restore the proper constitutional role of Congress in authorizing the use of military force in humanitarian interventions," Webb says.

As *The Hill* reports, the Military Humanitarian Operations Act of 2012 "would require the president to seek congressional approval to engage members of the U.S. Armed Forces in humanitarian operations, but would require Congress to consider these requests on an expedited basis. Under the bill, both the House and Senate would have 48 hours to consider these requests. The president could also insist that Congress return to consider these requests if it is not in session."

The bill is a reaction to the 2011 operation in Libya, which was launched without Congress' authorization.

"The question is simple," Webb says. "When should the president have the unilateral authority to decide to use military force, and what is the place of the Congress in that process? Year by year, skirmish by skirmish, the role of the Congress in determining where the U.S. military would operate, and when the awesome power of our weapon systems would be unleashed, has diminished."

[MILITARY AFFAIRS]

Pentagon's Cyber Command may get upgrade

U.S. military leaders are recommending the elevation of the Pentagon's Cyber Command – known as CYBERCOM – to a full combatant command status, *The Washington Post* reports. Cyber Command currently falls under Strategic Command.

"It certainly emphasizes the importance of cyber as a strategic priority," retired Air Force Lt. Gen. John Campbell told the *Post*. "It shortens the chain of command up to the president and secretary of defense."



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[ENVIRONMENT]

Two decades on, Philippines struggles with U.S. base cleanup

BY BEN BARBER

A recent survey of toxic sites in the Third World has listed two former U.S. military bases – Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base – as among the most heavily polluted.

Hundreds of thousands of American soldiers, sailors and airmen served in the Philippines before the U.S. military left in 1992. But the Department of Defense did not clean up the bases' waste before leaving. And with cost estimates for a cleanup at up to \$40 million per base, it is clear that the Philippines does not have the funds to pay for it.

With tens of thousands of people living and working at the former base sites, the health risk to children and adults has been of grave concern. Lead, asbestos, PCBs, pesticides and other dangerous chemicals remain in the soil and water. Nuclear waste from submarines may also be present.

For a century, the U.S. military ruled the western Pacific from the Philippines. Subic was the largest overseas U.S. naval base and Clark the largest overseas air base. From these sites U.S. forces fought the Japanese in World War II, except for the years that Japan occupied the Philippines. They also fought in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

But in 1988, Philippine nationalists protested against the U.S. bases. Then Mount Pinatubo erupted and left tons of ash on Clark, leading the United States to abandon it. When the United States offered only one quarter of the \$825 million in rent sought by Manila, Subic was also left in 1992.

Geologist Ira May has supervised the cleanup of dozens of military bases in the United States for DoD, including Rocky Mountain Arsenal. He surveyed Subic and Clark to determine the status of the remaining waste. "The military basically left everything in place," he says.

Four years ago, May reported back to the Pentagon on the amount of toxic waste needing to be cleaned up at the former bases but was told that the status of forces agreement governing U.S. forces in the Philippines did not require it.

He recommended the United States follow the standard procedures used to clean up bases at home, but his idea was rejected. "I feel we had a moral responsibility to clean it up," says May, who was hired by the nongovernmental organization Blacksmith Institute to examine the two bases.

The Philippines could try to sue in an international forum, but lately the nation has opted to remain on close terms with the United States as China flexes its muscle. Both Beijing and Manila claim ownership of the Spratly Islands, which lie in the South China Sea only 100 miles off the Philippines but many hundreds of miles from China. The islands are rich in fisheries and possibly undersea petroleum, and remain a major shipping route between the Middle East and Japan.

In April, the Philippines' only large military vessel – a 380-foot former U.S. Coast Guard cutter – trapped a few Chinese fishing boats in a shoal near the Spratlys, finding protected corals, giant clams and sharks on board. China responded by sending warships, insisting the shoal was Chinese – a claim based on medieval maps.

The dispute over the Spratlys – also claimed by Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei – made many Filipinos wish that the powerful U.S. fleet had stayed at Subic.

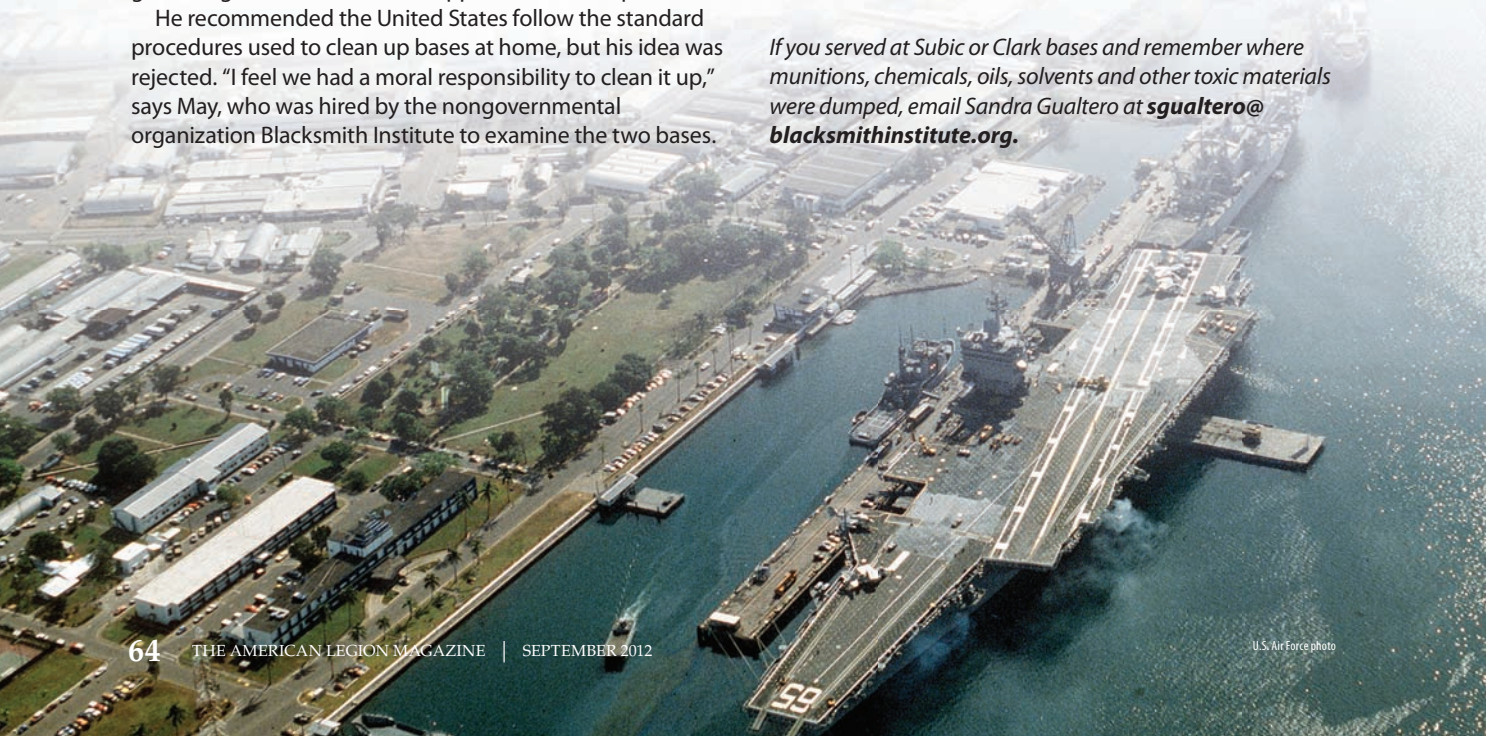
Recently, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned China that it should negotiate claims to the Spratlys in a wide forum – not bilaterally, where giant China is intimidating.

So, despite its wishes to get U.S. funding to clean up Subic and Clark – both of which have been opened up as free-trade industrial zones – Manila will not do anything to alienate its giant protector, the United States.

In addition, a Blacksmith pollution expert based in Manila says that local authorities are hoping to lure foreign investment to the two former bases and fear that any attention paid to toxic wastes could dampen enthusiasm. In the long term, however, the cost of damage to Filipinos' health may be far more than any gains from covering up toxic waste left by the United States.

Ben Barber is a freelance journalist and a communications adviser to the Blacksmith Institute.

If you served at Subic or Clark bases and remember where munitions, chemicals, oils, solvents and other toxic materials were dumped, email Sandra Gualtero at sgualtero@blacksmithinstitute.org.



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[HISTORY]

'American Legion Day' highlights federal charter

Sept. 16 is an important date on The American Legion calendar. In terms of the organization's roots, it's on par with the Legion's birthday on March 15, and it's especially meaningful to the organization's role in Washington.

On March 15, 1919, members of the American Expeditionary Force still stationed in Europe in the aftermath of World War I convened in Paris and formed The American Legion. Two months later, the fledgling wartime veterans organization met in St. Louis to continue defining its mission. Then, following a nationwide campaign to raise awareness and drive membership, Congress granted the Legion a federal charter on Sept. 16, 1919.

Originally called "An Act to Incorporate The American Legion," the charter was approved under U.S. Code, Title 36, which covers "Patriotic and National Observances, Ceremonies, and Organizations." It allowed the Legion to immediately begin working with the government to achieve common goals: advocating for veterans home from the war, obtaining "a square deal for every child," and making sure the lessons of the Great War would not be lost on America.

Under the charter's terms, the Legion must send a report to Congress every year giving an account of its activities and proceedings for the preceding year. This is why the national commander testifies before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs committees each fall.

Because Congress originally granted the charter, any major changes to it must be approved by Congress. This has rarely been done, most often to expand membership eligibility to veterans of different war eras. Last year, when the Legion began accepting online membership renewals and allowing dues payments by credit card, the Legion's constitution was changed to clarify the autonomous, independent nature of posts and departments, while at the same time allow the online service. The legislation passed easily – in fact, U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire, D-Pa., said the bill's 432 co-sponsors was the largest number of co-sponsors ever on a House bill.

In honor of the anniversary of the Legion's charter, posts and departments are encouraged to ask their local and state leaders to issue proclamations making Sept. 16 "American Legion Day." Learn how at www.legiontown.org/day.

Read The American Legion's federal charter:

 www.legion.org/about/charter



[SCOUTS]

Eagle Scout fixes up grandfather's Legion post



For Christopher Petrovski's Eagle Scout project, he chose his grandfather's American Legion post in Arlington Heights, Ill.

Petrovski and a group of volunteers spent two Saturdays power-washing, scraping and repainting three sides of Merle Guild Post 208's

exterior. They also cleaned and stained the post's wooden fence. Petrovski arranged to have the necessary tools, materials and refreshments for the two-day project, and saw that the job was completed on time. His Scout troop pitched in \$100, on top of the \$180 that Petrovski had already earned.

His grandfather, Charles, is a World War II Navy veteran and member of Post 208. His father, John, belongs to the post's Sons of The American Legion squadron.

The veterans of Post 208 appreciated Petrovski's labor of love. "I am amazed at how a young man can do such a big project so well from start to finish," Post 208 Commander Ellen Janda says. "He's really enhanced the image of our post building in the community."

Petrovski, a freshman at Marquette University, was awarded the rank of Eagle on June 20.

[LEGION NEWS]

Pennsylvania post receives \$10,000 donation

A family has donated \$10,000 to Albert R. Atkinson Jr. Post 210 in Doylestown, Pa., as thanks for the post's support of its Legion Baseball team and the community.

Adelbert Campbell, Post 210's commander, accepted the anonymous gift during the Doylestown Tigers' July 4 baseball game. The family asked not to be named, wanting to keep the attention on the post's veterans.

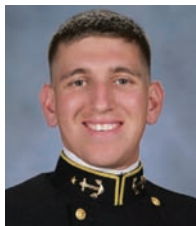
Steve Ruane, the Tigers team manager, read the letter accompanying the donation. "In choosing your team, you not only look for how well a player hits, fields and throws, but whether he has the character that is necessary to fulfill the obligation required of a Post 210 player. They not only have to perform in a team environment but perform community service as well.

"I find myself in a position to help the baseball program give back to the post for all the selfless support it's given to the team over the years. Many thanks for helping make my son the man he is today, and many thanks to Post 210 for affording you and your staff the opportunity to do just that."

[AWARDS]

Legion honors achievements of service academy graduates

Each year, The American Legion sponsors awards given to an exceptional student at each of the five military academies. The Legion's national vice commanders presented awards to the 2012 recipients at their respective graduation ceremonies last spring.



2nd Lt. Nicholas Denney
Riverbank, Calif.

Denney received The American Legion's award for the highest marks in English, history and government courses at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. Denney is a master's student at Georgetown University. He joins his father and uncle in the Marine Corps. National Vice Commander James H. Hales Jr. presented the award.



2nd Lt. Fred Feigel
Philadelphia

Feigel received The American Legion's Outstanding Cadet in Academic Performance Award at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo. Feigel will be heading to the University of London on a Marshall Scholarship, and plans to become an intelligence officer. National Vice Commander Larry D. Sheets presented the award.



Cadet 1st Class Hayley Feindel
River Ridge, La.

Feindel received The American Legion's award for excellence in athletics at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn. The softball pitcher's No. 16 will be retired this fall, the first time the academy has ever retired a uniform number. An All-American, Feindel took the Bears to the NCAA Division III tournament for the first time, and graduates holding numerous records both at the academy and in the NCAA division. National Vice Commander Mervin G. Gunderson presented the award.



Midshipman Nicholas Sottile
West Melbourne, Fla.

Sottile received The American Legion's award in the category of national security at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, N.Y. A four-year member of the academy's drill team, Sottile was commander of the team when it won the 2012 exhibition national championship. National Vice Commander Milton G. Heifner presented the award.



Cadet Anna Stein
Broomall, Pa.

Stein received The American Legion's award for the highest standing in chemistry at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y. Stein followed her grandfather to West Point, and will attend the Yale University School of Medicine next year. She plans to become an Army physician. National Vice Commander David N. Voyles presented the award.

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PERSONAL FINANCE

Say 'no' to impulse buys, credit cards this Christmas

If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

Though this phrase probably raises the ire of our editors (and English teachers across the land), it's hard to deny the point it makes: if you've got a good thing, keep it going. Last year at this time we landed on just such a thing when, with triple-digit temperatures still prevalent, we offered up some tips for avoiding holiday debt by getting on the holiday bandwagon early. A Christmas shopping discussion before Halloween is in our rearview mirror? We knew it was a risk, but we got some pretty positive feedback on this approach. So with a few minor edits, we've repackaged these five steps to help make the holidays a financial footnote and not a financial disaster:

■ **Have a plan.** A shopping list and a firm budget are central to a financially rewarding holiday season, so make yours now – and stick to it. This will help you avoid one of the landmines of holiday shopping: impulse buys.

■ **Set some aside now.** We've seen varying numbers, but it appears that the average family spends around \$1,000 on gifts. With at least seven paydays left before mid-December, pack your lunch, penny pinch, and then hit the ATM and stuff \$100 in an envelope each paycheck and – voila! – you're 70 percent of the way there. It's like a late start on the old



Christmas accounts, but not too late. And next year you can start earlier.

■ **Spread it out.** You've made a list of who is getting what. Why not start to chip away at it now? Clean out the back of the closet and start to stack those gifts in the back. You'll avoid the holiday rush and a big gash to your wallet. As a side benefit, you may find gifts you stashed in years past but forgot about.

■ **Plant the seeds.** Do all of your nieces and nephews, in-laws and out-laws, friends and neighbors need gifts? Probably not. Start talking now about limiting gifts. Consider drawing names, or swapping services as an alternative to pricey gifts. Get everyone on the same sheet of music early and you'll avoid hurt feelings and financial stress.

■ **Be a cash buyer.** While credit cards are convenient, they make it so easy to stray from your list, break your budget, and splurge. This year, commit to spending greenbacks only.

There you go! Early or not, make these tips the centerpiece of your 2012 holiday shopping season.

June Lantz Walbert and J.J. Montanaro are certified financial planners for USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. Submit questions for them online.

 www.legion.org/focusonfinances

[HOMELESSNESS]

At halfway mark, VA touts gains in ending vet homelessness

Halfway through the five-year federal plan to end veteran homelessness, the number of veterans spending the night on a friend's sofa, in a car, at a shelter or on the street has dropped significantly, and efforts to house and treat this group continue to expand.

"We are proud that we have almost cut in half the number of homeless veterans without a place to call home," says Pete Dougherty, associate executive director of VA's Homeless Veterans Initiatives Office. "Our power to go the remaining distance will come from our strong partnerships with The American Legion and the entire veteran service community."

Two and a half years ago, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki pledged to end veteran homelessness by 2015. A strategic plan was issued in 2010, coinciding with a public promise from Shinseki to end homelessness during his tenure.

On a single night in 2011, a national count of homeless veterans totaled 67,495, compared to 76,000 in 2010.

"The significant reduction in the number of homeless veterans shows that VA is moving in the right direction, although obviously there is still work to be done," says Mark Walker, assistant director of the Legion's Economic Division.

A centerpiece of VA's plan is aggressive outreach to homeless and at-risk veterans, urging them to phone a

national call center – (877) 4AID-VET – to access VA services for health care, housing, mental health treatment, job training and employment assistance. VA is also working with veterans service organizations like the Legion to spread the word and reach homeless veterans in their communities.

Calls to the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans have increased by 82 percent yearly since 2010, and trained call center responders have answered more than 90,000 calls since the phone lines opened. Homeless and at-risk veterans and their families also have access to VA services and support through an online chat at www.veteranscrisisline.net. Online chat volume has increased by 69 percent since 2010.

VA has enlisted more than 740 national and local organizations to strengthen the network of services available to at-risk veterans. The department is also developing better data systems to more accurately count female and male veterans experiencing homelessness and monitor how they are being served by available programs. VA expects this "living registry" to be in place this year.

"With this knowledge," Dougherty says, "we'll be able to devise better solutions to our two-part challenge: rescuing veterans already homeless and preventing veterans at risk from becoming homeless."



DEFECTIVE HIP

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We have learned that from studies past, present and ongoing that certain hip replacements made by the following companies and the following identified types have been recalled or are subject to pending national litigation. The hip replacement devices of concern are the following:

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Turner W. Branch, a principal and senior partner of the Branch Law Firm retired as a 1st Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps in 1968. He served on active duty in Camp Pendleton, California and at the Marine Corps Air Facility (MCAF) in Santa Ana, California. While at Camp Pendleton he served with the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division (FMF) USMC.

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[CHILDREN & YOUTH]

"One of CASA for Children's biggest supporters is The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. I am proud that The American Legion considers CASA for Children a worthy cause, and I am grateful for their continued support."

"I am particularly impressed with The American Legion's recognition of the individual's obligation to the community, state and nation. This is a value we share, and it strikes me as one that is particularly necessary these days, when it is so easy to believe that everyone is 'in it' for themselves."

"I've been pondering how our shared value – the individual's responsibility to the community – shines through the work of CASA for Children. It is, and always has been, a mistake to assume that government can assume the full responsibility to parent children who cannot live safely at home. Of course, government-operated child protection systems are necessary, but the government cannot take on the role of parent for any child. It is only through the involvement of individual community members that this crucial human aspect of protecting abused and neglected children can be fully carried out."

Michael Piraino, CEO of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children, who posted a blog entry July 2 about how The American Legion and CASA share a core value: the individual's responsibility to the community. In 2009, the Legion's National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 35, which encourages posts to assist local CASA for Children programs by recruiting qualified Legionnaires as CASA volunteers and raising community awareness about CASA.

 www.legion.org/youth/partners



[CONVENTION]

Convention on the go

Keep up with activities at the American Legion's 94th National Convention. Agendas, meeting schedules and maps in the convention's smartphone app will show you what's going on and where. Social media portals let you share the fun with friends. Follow news, photo and video feeds, even when you're on the move.

 www.legion.org/mobileapps



[EDUCATION]

VRAP requires full-time study



Q: I am a homeless Navy veteran living in transitional housing. I've been chronically working and getting laid off for years. I have slowly been losing everything, and now it seems that my skills and experience are no longer sought after. I have an associate degree. Am I still eligible for the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), and if so, how much would I receive monthly?

A: Yes, even if you have a degree and are unemployed on the day you apply for VRAP, you may be eligible for the program. Information for VRAP is posted at the GI Bill website, www.gibill.va.gov. To receive the benefit, you must be full time. The full-time monthly allowance for VRAP is \$1,473 per month for 12 months.

Valerie Heffner, a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Arizona, is a past vice president of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators. askvalerie@legion.org

[CAREERS]

Bring your résumé into digital age



Résumé writing has changed remarkably in recent years. Technology has had a direct impact, with live email and LinkedIn profile links, QR codes, and other trends affecting how people use résumés. These advances

have led to résumés written for "skimmers," in a shorter and more telegraphic writing style.

Here are four ways to respond to those changes and modernize your résumé today:

Write a great career summary by identifying the two or three most important things readers need to know about you. Showcase

that information in headlines, two-line paragraphs and/or one-line bullet points that clearly communicate who you are and the value you bring. (Despite its name, this section is not a summary of your entire career.)

Write powerful job descriptions by focusing on actions and results. Narrow it down to just the essentials, on one line if possible. Then use bullet points to highlight achievements – what you did and how well you did it.

Sell yourself. A job search is not the time for humility. Include your honors and awards, contributions to successful operations, tech qualifications, language skills, security clearances, and other information that gives you instant credibility and distinction.

Optimize your résumé for applicant tracking systems (ATS). First, use the right keywords for targeted jobs. Second, use common headings. "Experience" or "Professional Experience" is fine. "Career Highlights" is not understood, and your job history may be passed over. Third, put the company name (branch, division, command, headquarters) and job title on separate lines. Fourth, create a .txt version that strips out most formatting to create a plain résumé with no lines, boxes or tables. You will still need your nicely formatted Word version, as a job search is not just about uploading.

Start modernizing your résumé with some of these enhancements. Times have changed, job searching has changed, and your résumé must keep pace.

Wendy Enelow is co-author of "Expert for Résumé for Military-to-Civilian Transitions" and "Executive Résumé Toolkit."

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How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org or submit information via our website, www.legion.org/reunions.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine will publish a group's listing only once a year.**

Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life

memberships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership.** Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.** Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

2nd Bomb Grp 15th AF (Italy, 1943-1945), Omaha, NE, 9/12-15, Loy Dickinson, (720) 851-9663, loy@denvertest.com; **3rd A&E**, Pensacola, FL, 9/3-5, Dean Droz, (407) 957-2423, deandroz@yahoo.com; **4th FIW, 334th, 335th, 336th FIS & Support Personnel (Kimpoo AB, Korea)**, Phoenix, 9/26-30, Andrew Whipple, (352) 259-7792; **5th Bomb Grp (WWII)**, San Diego, 9/20-23, Dag Larsen, (949) 725-6460, omalarsen@aol.com; **47th Air Police Sqdn (England, 1952-1955)**, Fletcher, NC, 9/25-27, John Watts, (828) 686-4648, pgchief@aol.com; **90th Strat Recon Wing**, Nashville, TN, 9/14-18, Chuck Hale, (785) 760-3253, chucknhale@gmail.com; **351st Bomb Grp (H)**, Savannah/Pooler, GA, 9/3, Bruce Nocera, (718) 721-0924, bg351st@yahoo.com; **525th TFS & 36th TFW**, Bitburg, Germany, 9/18-21, Dean Yarolimek, (636) 447-5029, d.yarolimek@sbcglobal.net; **774th Tact AirLift Sqdn**, Abilene, TX, 10/5-6, William Robinson, (806) 470-7034, wrobin422@juno.com; **6314th SP Sqdn (Osan AB, Korea, 1968-1969)**, Branson, MO, 11/9-11, Vincent Darcangelo, (724) 877-9339, darcangelo@adelphia.net; **6994th Sec Sqdn & All Dets**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 9/13-15, Bob Hull, (740) 924-5261; **Westover AFB Spec Projects Production Facility - 8th Recon Tech Sqdn, 497th Recon Tech Grp, 6594th Test Sqdn, 7405th Support Grp & 7499th Support Grp**, Branson, MO, 10/7-12, Dick Temple, (703) 786-4743, commander77dt@aol.com

ARMY

1st Eng Cbt Bn, San Antonio, 9/9-11, Ron Labinski, (913) 362-6468, ron.labinski@gmail.com; **2nd Armd Div**, Nanuet, NY, 10/17-21, Barbara Denney, (214) 542-7971, bjdenny@verizon.net; **2nd Msl Bn 52nd ADA**, Miami, 10/20-21, Charles Carter, (404) 841-7686, charles@nike252.org; **4th Bn 39th Inf Rgt Inf Div (Vietnam, 1966-1967)**, Columbus, GA, 10/4-6, Jim Haines, (303) 809-1815, lzbearcat6@live.com; **7th Armd Sqdn 1st Air Cav "Blackhawks"**, Charleston, WV, 9/20-22, Louis Sanders, (408) 371-8358, lou@sandersusa.com; **11th Pathfinder Co (Prov)**, 1st Cav Div, Gettysburg, PA & Washington, DC, 11/9-12, Rob Wolaver, (765) 567-6138, rwolaver@gmail.com; **14th Trans Bn (AM&S) (GS) (Nha Trang, Tuy Hoa/Phu Hiep, Vietnam, 1965-1972)**, Kissimmee, FL, 11/7-12, Dan Quakenbush, (315) 436-0498, quack0711@twcny.rr.com; **15th Constab**, Mansfield, TX, 9/6-8, Horace Saldi, (301) 384-1168, salldog1@comcast.net; **41st Inf Div**, Sacramento, CA, 9/6-9, Bob Bach, (573) 535-9833, div41@yahoo.com; **65th Cbt Eng Bn (Vietnam)**, Woodbridge, VA, 10/12-15, Ken Dixon, (706) 260-5661, kathy_dixon2001@yahoo.com; **70th AAA Gun Bn (1953-1955)**, Branson, MO, 9/9-12, Jim Harden, (941) 377-5295, cribbagebd2@webtv.net; **79th Eng Const Bn (Korea & Germany)**, Branson, MO, 10/25-27, Bobby Thompson, (304)

776-2629, bobbyb301t6@aol.com; **79th Trans Co (DS) (Qui Nhon, Tuy Hoa, Vietnam, 1965-1972)**, Kissimmee, FL, 11/7-12, Art Harrison, (440) 668-0019, jam1996min@aol.com

167th Sig Co, San Antonio, 10/11-14, Chuck Widener, (309) 547-2579, catwide@sbcglobal.net; **192nd Assault Heli Co**, Fort Worth, TX, 9/26-29, James Godfrey, (817) 371-7033, wrockenstire@nycap.rr.com; **314th Inf Rgt, 79th Recon Trp, 79th Inf Div (WWII)**, New Orleans, 9/27-30, Merle Buck, (803) 536-1467, merleluckybuck@bellsouth.net; **335th Trans Co (DS) (Chu Lai, Dong Ba Thin, Vietnam, 1965-1971)**, Kissimmee, FL, 11/7-12, Ernest McDaniel, (434) 685-3759, revernst@minister.com; **339th Trans Co (DS) (Nha Trang, Tuy Hoa/Phu Hiep, Vietnam, 1962-1968)**, Kissimmee, FL, 11/7-12, Ralph Frank, (352) 527-9319, rf339ds@embarqmail.com; **540th Trans Co (GS) (Qui Nhon, Vietnam, 1965-1971)**, Kissimmee, FL, 11/7-12, Wayne Gallant, (916) 543-4856, wayne.gallant@sbcglobal.net; **604th Trans Co (DS) (Pleiku, Vietnam, 1966-1973)**, Kissimmee, FL, 11/7-12, Harald Hendrichsen, (503) 888-6510, harald@604th.com; **608th Trans Co (DS) (Dong Ba Thin, Vietnam, 1967-1972)**, Kissimmee, FL, 11/7-12, Dan Sippel, (912) 876-5017, dsippel@coastalnow.net; **610th Trans Co (GS) (An Khe & Da Nang, Vietnam, 1966-1972)**, Kissimmee, FL, 11/7-12, Al Walker, (570) 662-2328, colcmsr@frontier.com; **614th AVEL (DS) (Nha Trang/Pleiku, Vietnam, 1966-1972)**, Kissimmee, FL, 11/7-12, Frank Ferry, (203) 205-9021, frankgferry@yahoo.com

864th Eng Bn Alumni Assn, Washington, 9/27-30, Paul Lantz, (978) 922-8552, lantzbuilt@gmail.com; **A Co 4th Bn 23rd Inf Rgt 25th Inf Div (Vietnam, Nov 1969-Oct 1970)**, Minneapolis, 9/7-9, D. Jacobs, (763) 261-2237, 4jacobs@izoom.net; **ASA Korea Vets**, Pigeon Forge, TN, 9/19-22, Bob Rudolph, (269) 789-2860, bnrudolph@sbcglobal.net; **CID Agents**, Louisville, KY, 9/26-30, Doc Sautter, (770) 596-6706, leo.cidaa@yahoo.com; **Delta Co 1st Bn 18th Inf Rgt 1st Inf Div Swamp Rats (1967-1968)**, San Antonio, 10/26-28, Mel Bravy, (619) 813-8651, prince192@cox.net; **Society of the 3rd Inf Div**, Savannah, GA, 9/6-9, Trish Blanton, (360) 663-2521, thereunionbrat@hotmail.com

COAST GUARD

Mendota, Wrightsville Beach, NC, 10/17-19, Jack Wilson, (910) 508-9036, jlwswr@bellsouth.net

JOINT

Assn of Military Musicians, Huntsville, AL, 9/20-22, Bill von Kamp, (256) 533-1674; **Brady AB/Camp Hakata, Japan (Military, NSA & Civilians)**, Helen, GA, 9/10-14, Tom or Marianne Morfoot, (770) 957-1085, mam30248@earthlink.net

MARINES

B-1-1 (Okinawa, Mar 1959-Apr 1960), Las Vegas, 9/24-26, William Sitar, (723) 283-9000, sitar@sitarcamp.com; **Pt 529 2nd Bn (Sept-Dec 1952)**, Parris Island, SC, 9/1, Chris Vail, (707) 321-5018, greenmtchris@comcast.net

NAVY

Carter Hall LSD 3, Virginia Beach, VA, 9/27-30, Lauren Meiswinkel, (610) 692-7024; **Chester CA 27**, Washington, 9/6-9, Janet Watson, (281) 251-3454, lucyj9@sbcglobal.net; **Constellation**, Jacksonville, FL, 10/21-26, Tommy Best, (919) 383-7216, bestbecum@aol.com; **Corpsmen United**, Rapid City, SD, 9/10-13, Ken Buster, (501) 691-0373, kbuster@suddenlink.net; **Cushing DD 376/797/985**, Dayton, OH, 9/13-15, Art Martinucci, (814) 833-4709, amartinucci@aol.com; **Dixie AD 14**, New Orleans, 9/27-30, J.T. Smyth, (615) 513-2440, jts912@att.net; **Farragut Naval Tng Stn (WWII)**, Farragut, ID, 9/8, Elizabeth Spooner, (281) 589-7901; **Fort Snelling**, Branson, MO, 9/11-13, Fred Dyson, (409) 796-2077; **Frank E. Evans DD 754**, Dallas, 9/27-29, John Coffey, (706) 335-0724, johnjudyc@gmail.com; **Hunt DD 674**, Lancaster, PA, 10/10-15, Susie Wilson, (267) 994-3667, susiewilson52@hotmail.com; **Landing Craft Unit 32**, St. Charles, IL, 9/14-16, Loyd Miller, (630) 365-6335

LCS Assn, Nashville, TN, 9/27-30, Ginny Rooney, (610) 256-9223, ginnroon@verizon.net; **LCS(L) 1-130**, Nashville, TN, 9/27-30, Ginny Rooney, (610) 256-9223, ginnroon@verizon.net; **Lindenwald LSD 20**, Virginia Beach, VA, 9/27-30, Lauren Meiswinkel, (610) 692-7024; **Lyman K. Swenson DD 729**, Charleston, SC, 9/13-16, Don Thompson, (828) 974-2224, president@dd729.com; **McDermut DD 677**, San Antonio, 9/23-26, Dan Felger, (202) 488-8268, danjeandc@verizon.net; **Murray DD/DDE 576**, Norfolk, VA, 9/19-23, Neil DenBleyker, (315) 673-2181, ndenblke@aol.com; **Navy Beach Jumpers Assn**, Great Lakes, IL, 10/4-6, Alan VanBladel, (727) 487-6252, reunion2012@beachjumpers.com; **Navy Competitive Shooters**, Indianapolis, 9/12-15, Bob Siefker, (317) 886-8186, rsiefker@indyblue.com; **New York BB 34**, Virginia Beach, VA, 10/18-21, Brian Colona, (713) 858-8835, bcc@vitool.com; **Panamint**, Annapolis, MD, 10/18-21, Jen Balderson, (312) 545-4769, jen.balderson@gmail.com; **Perry**, New Orleans, 10/18-21, Steve Silk, (973) 696-2268, steve@ussperry.com

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IN SEARCH OF

2nd RT Bn L Co Plt 127 (Parris Island, SC, Jan-March 1966), Milton Terry Bice, (205) 822-7886, tajbice@att.net
16th Cbt Support Hosp/16th Mobile Army Surg Hospital (Fort Riley, KS, 1970-1996), Chris LaRose, (816) 592-9133, esoral@sbcglobal.net
102nd Evac Hosp (SM) (France & Germany, 1943-1945), R.A. Michalk, (713) 664-9110, jramich88@aol.com
A Co 1304th Eng Const Bn (Ledo Road, Burma, 1944-1945), Louis Dezso, (201) 845-7707
A Co 5th Amph Tract Bn HQ Plt (Del Mar, CA, May-July 1966 & Camp Swab, Okinawa, Aug 1966-Feb 1967), Milton Terry Bice, (205) 822-7886, tajbice@att.net
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Co 114 (Bainbridge, MD, 1953), Sandy McDonald, (616) 453-0732, heekon@yahoo.com
Co 929 (NTC Great Lakes, IL, July-Oct 1963), David Clark Sr., (304) 671-5720, 12dallen@comcast.net
Estes AGC 12 (San Diego, 1955-1957), George "Joe" Joseph, (603) 624-4180, g.bj@myfairpoint.net
Gas Generating Units 1038-1044, Richard Tusciani, (631) 399-6192
Hall DD 583 (1943-1946), Bill Currier, (207) 797-5839, wcurrier@maine.rr.com
HQ & HQ Co Sig Comm Agency (Camp Zama, Japan, 1959-1962), George Dickson, (605) 335-4701, ghd226@midco.net
Koiner DER 331 (1962-1964), Larry "Jake" Jacobsmeyer, (801) 725-1627
Lorain County LST 1177 (CINCLANTFLT, Little Creek, VA, Aug 1965-July 1967), David Clark Sr., (304) 671-5720, 12dallen@comcast.net
NAVCOMMSTA (Keflavik NAS & Site H-2 Langanese, Iceland, July 1964-July 1965), David Clark Sr., (304) 671-5720, 12dallen@comcast.net
Radioman "A" School (Bainbridge, MD, Oct 1963-June 1964), David Clark Sr., (304) 671-5720, 12dallen@comcast.net

TAPS

Joseph T. Aiello, Dept. of New York. Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Vice Chmn. 1980-1982 and Nat'l Law & Order Cmte. Memb. 1985-2012.
William G. Clancy, Dept. of New York. Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Vice Chmn. 1996-2010 and Nat'l & Homeland Security Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2010-2012.
Peter M. Elson, Dept. of Hawaii. Dept. Cmdr. 2007-2008, Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2003-2008 and Nat'l Children & Youth Cmsn. Memb. 2008-2009.
Elliot J.H. Morrison, Dept. of Arizona. Dept. Cmdr. 1994-1995, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1995-1998 and Nat'l Foreign Relations Cmsn. Consultant 1998-2004.



Cover,
*The American
 Legion Magazine*,
 June 1944

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To err is human. To blame it on somebody else shows management potential.

A BOXER marched into his manager's office, closed the door and put on his most determined look. "Now listen here," he told the manager. "I've been training for six months, and I'm in the best shape I've ever been in. I've stayed away from desserts and gone to bed at 10 every night. I've never been better. I want Killer McPug! Get me a fight with Killer McPug!"

The manager walked around his desk and put his arm around the boxer's shoulders. "I keep telling you, champ, you are Killer McPug!"

A WOMAN placed an ad offering a new Porsche for \$10. A man answered the ad but was skeptical.

"What's the gimmick?" he asked.

"There's no gimmick," the woman replied.

"My husband just died, and his will stated that he wanted his car sold and the money given to his secretary."

MIDDLE AGE is when broadness of the mind and narrowness of the waist change places.

A PRIEST officiating at a funeral started his remarks by saying, "We are gathered here today to pay homage to a good man. He was a kind man, a man loved by everyone, a man who treasured his family as they did him."

The widow of the deceased leaned over to her grandson and whispered, "Sweetheart, go up and make sure it's your grandpa in that coffin."



"I believe I'll tip myself, as I'm the only one who's been doing any waiting."



"That's my paparazzi and mamarazzi."



A LITTLE BOY was so bad at sports that after half a season in Little League, his father traded him to another team for \$10 and a child to be born later.

THE PRESIDENT of a financial firm stopped in the brokers' office to eavesdrop on a new employee. He listened as the young man talked eight consecutive contacts into moving their stock portfolios to him.

The boss approached the young man and said, "I've been listening in, and I must say I'm impressed with your ability. Where did you learn so much about talking to investors?"

"Yale, sir," the young man answered.

"What's your name?"

"Yackson."

"MAYOR BLOOMBERG has outlawed giant cans of soda. When you outlaw stuff, it creates crime. I saw a guy today walking down the street, and a cop is arresting him because he's got a huge can of soda, and he said, 'No, no, this is medicinal Mountain Dew.'" – David Letterman



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